

Story Circle Journal

The newsletter for women with stories to tell...

Volume 3 Number 2

From Inspiration to Reality

Here at Story Circle, we have been doing a great many things lately—helping to organize a new local chapter; carrying out our spring programs of talks, workshops, circles, and get-togethers; and planning for the future. But one of our most important activities this spring has been carrying out the first phase of the OWL-Circle Guided Memoir Project. The project is under the direction of Catherine Cogburn and Dayna Finet, who have worked together ably to meet the challenges of doing something that hasn't been done before, at least on such a grand scale! Recently, Dayna wrote a report on the current status of the project. We wanted to share it with you, so that you can see what we've been up to here in Austin. Soon, we'll be inviting you to find ways to join us in this wonderful story-telling activity. We hope you'll be interested in finding out more about it as the months go along.

The OWL-Circle Memoir Project began as an inspiration, but with no practical models for guidance. Now, with our experience from the first OWL-Circle workshops, we know better how to do it—and we've grown even more inspired!

Funded through a grant from the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in Houston, the OWL-Circle Project involves a series of guided memoir-writing workshops for women over sixty. Writings from these workshops will be compiled in booklet form, both for participants and as an historical record of the lives of Texas women. At the end of the project, Story Circle Network will publish the OWL-Circle workbook and manual. They will be available nation-wide.

These first few OWL-Circle months have been a time of practical progress. So far, we have completed or made substantial progress in these tasks:

- **Created** a structure for the OWL-Circles, with a participants' working and facilitators' manual to support it;
- **Conducted** eleven OWL-Circle workshops at various sites in Austin TX, including a health education program, senior residence centers, churches, and city recreation centers;
- **Evaluated** the first group of workshops, to help us plan the revisions that will go into place over the next few months;
- **Established** a central office and administrative procedures;
- **Created** an OWL-Circle website (<http://www.owlcircle.org>)
- **Responded** to hundreds of calls, letters, and e-mail messages from those interested in the Project;
- **Compiled** the first booklets of writings by OWL-Circle participants; and

We are at a time of the changing of the story. We're at the end of one era, and not quite at the beginning of a new one.

We do not yet see it, but we can feel a new story in our bones.—

Jean Houston



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Story Circle Stays Busy—*from Page 1*

- **Begun planning**, with the University of Texas Press, a book based on OWL-Circle writings.

Work on the OWL-Circle project continues. We're excited about what we're doing, and about the way the project has touched the lives of participants. We are more than ever convinced of the importance of writing our life stories and leaving the legacy of our memories behind.—*Dayna Finet*

The Story Circle Network

The Story Circle Network—What is it and who are the members?

The Story Circle Network is made up of women who want to explore their lives by exploring their stories.

What can I gain from the Network?

You will receive the following publications, information, and opportunities. These things won't be available all at once—we're just getting started! But as our membership grows, our activities will expand. You'll get:

- ◇ **four issues** of the 16- to 22-page newsletter, *Story Circle Journal*, with ideas for writing additional chapters of your life story, plus poetry and brief personal essays from subscribers
- ◇ **the opportunity to submit your writing** to the newsletter and other Network publications
- ◇ **a network guide** that will allow you to directly contact members with interests and experiences similar to yours (forthcoming, as the Network grows and members send us their information)
- ◇ **a report on the activities of Story Circles** across the country, in each issue of the newsletter
- ◇ **book reviews and a resource guide** listing groups, teachers, and publications that are committed to helping women tell their stories (in each newsletter)

What can I contribute to the Network?

The Story Circle Network is built out of our shared experiences. To it, we hope you will bring yourself and your willingness to share your life and what you have learned from it. If you wish, you may contribute some of your writing (poetry, prose, book reviews—ask for a copy of our writer's guidelines). If you are a teacher or group leader, you are invited to calendar your related events.

We also hope that many of you will decide to participate by leading a Story Circle in your community. It isn't hard, and it's enormously rewarding. Won't you give it a try?

How do I become a member?

That's the easiest part! You automatically become a member of the Network when you subscribe to *Story Circle Journal*. Annual memberships are \$20 in the United States, \$26 in Canada and Mexico, and \$30 elsewhere. You will find a membership form at the back of this newsletter. Please join us and share your story.

You're on the Net?

So are we!

Visit us at

www.storycircle.org

www.owlcircle.org



Story Circle

STORY CIRCLE is a quarterly newsletter, published in February, May, August, and November. 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.

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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. Unless you send us your new address, we can't guarantee that you'll receive your newsletter!

Writing About Real People

Your life story is peopled by a variety of family members, close friends, and acquaintances. Many of these real people have had an important influence for better (and sometimes for worse) on your life, and you will want to include them. Writing about our relationships with others helps us to understand them, and your readers—family and friends—will be interested in knowing about the people who have helped to make you who you are. Writing about other people isn't always easy, however. Here are some ideas that may help.

Your Cast of Characters

Your life is like a Broadway play—full of interesting characters, each one playing a major or minor role in your drama, and each one a star of his or her own drama. One way to begin writing about the people in your life is to create a cast of characters: a list of the people you have known or loved. You can make this list in the *order of their appearance* or in the *order of their importance*.

- In *appearance order*, your parents will probably come first, followed by other relatives and childhood friends, down to those who have appeared more recently in your life.
- In *importance order*, you will need to choose the people who have meant most to you, either in your life as a whole or at this moment.

When you've written down the names of the characters in your life, you will want to add a couple of lines of identification—or more, if that's appropriate. You might include a bit of anchoring biographical information as well as a couple of sentences about the facts of your relationship to this person.

Unforgettable Characters

You've heard people say: "She [or he] is quite a character." Usually, they mean that a certain person looks or acts in a distinctive or memorable way. In your life story, you'll want to create memorable characters—people who are as *alive* to your readers as they have been to you. To do this, consider the following questions:

- What made the person so significant to you? What did she do for you?

- How did he shape your life?
- What do you remember most about this person's physical presence? Appearance? Gestures, posture? Voice, speech style, or accent? Clothing? Special scent? Include as much specific detail as you can.
 - What do you recall about this person's family and work background? Where did she come from? What did he do to earn a living? (You might want to do some research here.)
 - What made this person unique as an individual? Did she believe in ghosts? Did he collect bottles or garden? Did she make quilts?
 - What amusing or odd or interesting (or even tragic) anecdote do you remember about this person?

If you answer each of these questions in three or four sentences, you will quickly develop a complete character sketch, and that person who was so meaningful to you will come alive for your readers.

True Tales of Real People

One thing that always concerns memoirists is the question of truth and privacy. "How far can I go in revealing what I know about this person?"

If the person you are writing about has died, you will probably feel much more free to reveal personal details, especially eccentric or unpleasant ones. If s/he is still alive and is likely to read what you've written, you may feel the same constraints that you would if you were speaking to that person. Be truthful, of course, and acknowledge that this is *your* truth, not necessary *the* truth. And be respectful of the other person's right to privacy. If you have confidential or secret information about someone else, you'll want to think carefully before you commit it to paper. Perhaps you should ask the person's permission first—but you're the best judge of that.

These cautions aside, writing true tales about the real people in your life is doubly rewarding, both for you and for your readers.

FROM FACT TO STORY

When we write about our lives, the facts of our relationships with people get turned into stories. The story itself may be true, but it will more fun to write and read if you develop it through the use of familiar fictional techniques.

Dialogue

In stories, people talk to one another, and important truths are revealed in dialogue. Can you include a conversation with your character? ("But I don't remember her exact words!" you'll say. Don't worry about being true to the letter—rather, be faithful to the spirit of your memory.)

Conflict

Stories are built around conflict—that's what makes them so interesting! Can you tell a story of a conflict you had with one or more of your important characters? How does the conflict illustrate your relationship? Did the conflict persist, or did you resolve it? What did the conflict teach you about yourself?

Setting

The setting of a story can reveal a great deal about character. Say that you're writing about your grandmother. What do you remember about her house? Where was it located? Was it large or small, simple or elegant? How was it furnished? Did it have a garden? What does this setting say about the person (your grandmother) who created it?

The Journaling Page . . .

Spiritual Journaling

by lisa shumicky

When I think of spiritual journaling, the first thing—or should I say the first person—who comes to mind is Christina Baldwin & her wonderfully innovative text, *Life's Companion: Journal Writing as a Spiritual Quest*. I agree with Baldwin: journal writing *is* a spiritual quest, and sitting with my notebook is a form of meditation for me. *Life's Companion* is uniquely designed. Baldwin says: “The right-hand pages form a continuous narrative. The left-hand pages contain two columns...the outermost...a series of journal writing exercises, questions, techniques, and suggestions...the inner, quotes from published and unpublished sources that relate to the topic at hand. This could actually be a way to structure your own spiritual journal writing. Copy a quote or question on the left-hand page (maybe **creatively**...pen it **calligraphically**, or print it on the computer in a *distinctive font*. Illustrate it with rubber stamps, stickers, line drawings, markers. The time spent visually enhancing it could be a period of meditation and reflection) then start to write out your insights, understandings, or puzzlements on the right-hand page.

On-line, brother Kan K. Phillips also discusses “How To Develop a Spiritual Journal” (<http://edge.edge.net/~dphillip/Journal.html>). He considers how to begin, what to record, and includes generous excerpts from his own journal.

Although I firmly believe that everybody's journal is a spiritual one in one sense or another, Thomas Merton is probably most representative (published, anyway) spiritual journaling in practice. Consult any of his diaries (I love the titles! *Dancing in the Water of Life*, *Turning Toward the World*, *Entering the Silence*, *The Search for Solitude*, *The Other Side of the Mountain*) to see how he struggled and to inspire you to start a journal of your own.

In a new book, John Katz does just that... On the cusp of turning 50—a troubling time for both Katz & Merton, his long-time literary mentor)—Katz begins negotiations to purchase a tumbledown cabin in the mountains of upstate New York. He takes his battered old, read and reread, well-loved copies of Merton's diaries and letters with him to provide guidance and solace. *Running to the Mountain* chronicles a spiritual journey.

Of course, the easiest way to start a spiritual journal might be to adopt Sarah Ban Breathnach's practice of daily gratitudes. Simply list five things each day that you are grateful for. It's a way to pause in your busyness and reflect on your life.



The Creativity Timeline

by Carolyn R. Guss

Continuing our focus on creativity, we offer this valuable article from Carolyn R. Guss, of Ardmore PA. Carolyn is a freelance editor and illustrator. Formerly employed by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Endowment for the Arts, she now heads Journeys & Chronicles, a self-discovery service that utilizes journal and autobiographical writing, collage, and Tarot work.

When did you decide you were a creative person? Did you know it at birth (or before!)? Learn it at your mother's knee? Hear it in school?

Most of us didn't, despite our parents' tacit encouragement of childhood artistic efforts (such as displaying our art work on refrigerators or bulletin boards). Perhaps we received lessons in music, dance, or drawing if we were fortunate, but even those—with enforced practicing of scales, rigidly learned foot positions, or endless sketching exercises—didn't strongly encourage free-spirited creative expression. So it was relatively easy to grow up feeling pedestrian: a diligent student; a good follower of directions; but *creative*? Maybe not. Or *creative how*? If we are lucky, we have by now recognized and embraced our innate creativity as an adult. And if not, we might be still searching. In either situation, the *Creativity Timeline* can help.

Similar in nature to the late Ira Progoff's (of the Intensive Journal Method) Steppingstones technique, the *Creativity Timeline*, as I devised it, aids us in identifying and tracking our creative stirrings, sproutings, and blossomings, and serves as a powerful tool in affirming the creative person each of us aspires to be.

Start Anywhere. As with all autobiographical writing, you can choose to construct your timeline from a variety of vantage points—such as the big picture, in which you begin in childhood and stretch your line to the present day; or, as in the memoir, offering a more condensed version by selecting a segment of your life that felt like a particularly fertile time for you or a developmental period for personal creativity. Of course the line extends both forward and backward, and points can be plotted along the way at any time.

When I began my own timeline, I selected as a starting point my young adult years, during which I felt strong artistic stirrings and explored a variety of creative paths. At another sitting I stepped back further, identifying acts of personal creativity in my teenage years—which in turn linked to my young adulthood. Later still, I turned to childhood, and was surprised at what creative urges I uncovered. Eventually the whole picture came together.

Which is one of the benefits of the timeline. Once you begin tracking, one thing leads to another: patterns emerge, and a flow—even a story—begins to take shape. Thus, the poems you spontaneously penned by flashlight on your bunk while away at summer camp lead into the short story you wrote for English composition and which your teacher submitted to the high school literary magazine. Or the “experiment” you baked for your brother's birthday segues into the decorated desserts you sold while in graduate school. And so on. The timeline helps

you to figure it all out and spot trends and patterns in your unique creative life. It also helps you *identify* creative acts which you may not yet have recognized. For example, until I understood the timeline, I hadn't realized that I was being creative when, as a child, I drew and cut out paper dolls and devised wardrobes and personalities for them. It just seemed like playing. Likewise, the intricate games I made up when I was bored with the ones in boxes.

To create your timeline, you can simply take a tablet or notebook and begin logging dates and creative deeds. (If in doubt, log it in; you can always delete later, if you choose to.) Alternately, you can use large sheets (or a roll) of paper and a ruler to draw a line, plotting dates and creative actions along it. Or maybe try both. If you find, as you work, that you have several types of creative efforts going on simultaneously—things that cross over and feed into each other (such as writing and illustrating your own poems)—you might experiment with drawing a full grid or graph and plotting areas both horizontally and vertically. Play around and have fun. The timeline itself is a creative act.

And be liberal in your interpretation of creativity. In *Awakening Minerva: The Power of Creativity in Women's Lives* (Warner Books, 1997), Linda A. Firestone says: “Creativity can and does happen in small private acts every day.” She emphasizes the need for “ordinary” women to expand the definition of creativity to include the simple quotidian things we do, such as cooking a meal, entertaining a child, and decorating a room. “We have trained ourselves intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually to ‘see’ and comprehend creativity narrowly,” Firestone says, which has “limited and weakened the potential within each of us.” Not all creative acts need result in public recognition or critical acclaim, or even follow traditionally defined artistic ends—such as producing a painting, writing a play, or choreographing a dance. These are, of course, wonderful creative acts, and many of us aspire to and attempt them, with some degree of success. Ultimately, however, as Firestone explains, “Creativity in all its healthy manifestations is a celebration of self. The more a woman celebrates her creative voice, the more there is to celebrate....Every action I take that challenges me and deepens my creativity also reveals to me what creativity is. Creativity is accessible to anyone who values it, wants it, and seeks it.”

The timeline, of course, is just the beginning. Creating it usually encourages us to go deeper and write longer entries about several of the areas we have plotted. There is a story in each and every one of them; all we need do is recognize, acknowledge, and allow it to emerge. To paraphrase Descartes, *I create, therefore I am*. Now is the time to write about what you have created.

Mother, Mother

Writing About the Motherbond

by Susan Wittig Albert

Each issue, Susan writes about life-writing. Her articles are designed to help you add chapters to your life story. They will usually take a form similar to the chapters of her book **Writing From Life: Telling Your Soul's Story**, offering ideas and topics for your writing. If you do all the exercises suggested here, you will have enough material to create one full chapter of your book—the story of your life, to which (we hope) you are continuing to add new chapters. So look into your experience, pull out those memories, and open a new chapter in the story of your life.

A woman writing thinks back through her mother.—
Virginia Woolf

Family faces are magic mirrors. Looking at people who belong to us, we see the past, present, and future
.—Gail L. Buckley

*When I stopped seeing my mother with the eyes of a child, I saw a woman who helped me give birth to myself.—*Nancy Friday

*“Oh, I know all about my mother and me,” you may say. “All that business with my mother was over years ago.” You don’t and it wasn’t.—*Nancy Friday

Mother



Our relationships with our mothers can be among the most challenging of our lives. Before we were born, we were part of her body, and drew on her physical resources for our existence.

After we were born (if we were cared for by our birth mothers), we were part of her life, consuming enormous amounts of her energy, time, and attention for the greater part of two entire decades. And yet, the process of becoming adult women—our *own* women—requires us to free ourselves from the motherbond and build our own lives, separate from hers yet respecting and honoring the precious gifts of life and care that she gave to us. Writing about our mothers—remembering and setting down the events of our separate yet joined lives—can be an important part of that process.

Mother's Life



If you haven't ever set down the facts of your mother's life, as you know them, this is a good time to begin. Her story doesn't need to be elaborate, but writing factually about her is a good way to begin to write about the relationship you have had with her. (If you don't know your birth mother, write about the woman who acted as your mother when you were growing up.) Here are some questions to help you get started:

- ◇ Where was your mother born? When? To whom?
- ◇ What were the circumstances of her early life? Where did she live? What challenges did she face as a young girl growing up? What was her relationship to her mother?
- ◇ When did your mother leave home? Under what circumstances? Was it a difficult leave-taking?
- ◇ What your mother's life like in the two decades she spent rearing you? Where did she live? With whom? What was her relationship to her mother during this time?
- ◇ What was her life like in the two-three decades after you moved away? Where did she live? With whom? What was her relationship to her mother during these decades?
- ◇ What is your mother's life like now?
- ◇ If she is dead, what were the circumstances of her death?

Life With Mother, and After



My memories of the years I spent in my mother's home are a mixed bag of good and bad, happy and sad. I was born in 1940, and I lived at home until 1958—a period of time which saw enormous changes for many women in the United States.

Women took jobs outside the home, earned college degrees, gained power and self-esteem and self-confidence.

But my mother's life seemed largely unaffected by those changes. She was a homemaker whose major outside interest was church activities, and the small town we lived in offered few opportunities for intellectual life. We didn't have a television and she didn't read very much. She was also challenged by a difficult relationship with my father, who was an alcoholic, a disease that people knew little about at the time. I loved my mother, but I didn't understand how she could stay in such an abusive relationship, or why she didn't try to do something to improve her situation. I don't suppose our relationship had more than the usual conflicts, but it wasn't close, for I was critical of her and felt as if I had nothing in common with her. I wanted her to be a mentor, as well as a mother, but her mentoring would have made me like herself, and I couldn't tolerate the idea of growing up to be like her—passive, accepting, willing to live life on the sidelines, capitulating to a verbally abusive husband. I left home following my high school graduation, and for nearly two decades afterward, visited or phoned her infrequently. She accepted my leaving and my disconnection without complaint or attempting to force a relationship upon us. It wasn't until I was in my forties and had mothered a daughter of my own that I took the trouble to learn enough about my mother to begin to understand her, to see her choices within the context of her own time and experience, and to start the long and difficult process of healing the broken motherbond between us.

That's the story of my relationship with my mother—now it's your turn. Try writing a capsule history of the years you spent with your mother and a short sketch of your relationship after you left home. Here are some questions you might consider. If you write a few sentences in response to each one, you will quickly construct a full narrative. (Of course, you can always go back and add more later.)

- ◇ What do you remember about your mother during your childhood years—say, before age 10? What was the central focus of her life? What were her other interests? Her challenges? What was the quality of her relationship to her husband, if she was married? How did she relate to you? Was she generally happy, sad, resentful, angry?
- ◇ What do you remember about your mother during the years between your ages 10-18? What was her main focus? What other interests did she have? What special challenges? What kind of relationship did she have to her husband? To you? Was she happy, sad, resentful, angry?
- ◇ During the years you lived with your mother, did you feel satisfied

I struggle to describe what it felt like to be her daughter, but I find myself divided, slipping under her skin; a part of me still identifies too much with her. I know deep reservoirs of anger toward her still exist...and I know there must be deep reservoirs of anger in her.

When I think of the conditions under which my mother became a mother, the impossible expectations, my father's distaste for pregnant women, his hatred of all that he could not control, my anger at her dissolves into grief and anger for her, and then dissolves back again into anger at her: the ancient, unpurged anger of the child.—Adrienne Rich

The point at which a woman recognizes the limitations of her mother's power and freedom in the patriarchal world is the same point at which she will turn to father or fatherly figures to find access to the power her mother lacks.—Polly Young-Eisendrath and Florence L. Weidemann

People love the way they're capable of loving—but that's not always how you want them to love or how you think they should love.
—Patti Davis

The only thing that seems eternal and natural in motherhood is ambivalence.—Jane Lazarre

Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mother's; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery.—
Adrienne Rich

*To distance herself from her mother and the motherhold on her, a woman may go through a period of rejection of all feminine qualities distorted by the cultural lens as inferior, passive, dependent, seductive manipulative, and powerless.—*Maureen Murdock

*My mother's frustrations powered both my feminism and my writing. But much of the power came out of my anger and my competition: my desire to outdo her, my hatred of her capitulation to her femaleness, my desire to be different because I feared I was too much like her.—*Erica Jong

by what she was able to give you, both as a mother and as a mentor? If not, what did you want from her that you did not receive? Why couldn't she give it? What lasting lessons did you learn from her?

- ◇ What was it like when you left home? Did your mother make this rite of passage easy for you, or difficult? Did *you* make it more difficult than it needed to be?
- ◇ What is your relationship to your mother like now? If it has changed since the time you left home, how is it different? What accounts for the difference?
- ◇ In what ways do you resemble your mother? How are you different?

Depending on the circumstances, your answers to these questions may come out of pleasant memories of happy times (on page 10, you'll find a piece called "My Mother" which is obviously based in a close, loving relationship) or painful recollections of a strained and unhappy connection—or both, for the motherbond is complex, often made up of ambivalences, doubts, and deeply conflicting feelings.

For a daughter's view of the difficult process of letting go, here is a passage from the diary of Anne Frank, who speaks for all daughters who want to strike out on their own, into a world that lies beyond their mothers' powers to imagine it:

We are exact opposites in everything; so naturally we are bound to run up against each other. I don't pronounce judgement of Mummy's character, for that is something I can't judge. I only look at her as a mother, and she just doesn't succeed in being that to me; I have to be my own mother....

Over a half-century later, mothers and daughters are doing no better in their attempts to let go of each others. This passage—a letter to a daughter—was written by Erica Jong, in her book, *Fear of Fifty*:

Molly, I want to release . . . But if I release you too much, what will you have to fight against?

You need my acceptance, but you may need my resistance more. I promise to stand firm while you come and go. I promise unwavering love while you experiment with hate. Hate is energy too—sometimes brighter-burning energy than love. Hate is often the precondition for freedom.

No matter how I try to disappear, I fear I cast too big a shadow. I would erase that shadow if I could. But if I erased it, how would you know your own shadow? And with no shadow, how could you ever fly?

Freedom is full of fear. But fear isn't the worst thing we face. Paralysis is.

Letting go, I love you. Letting go, I hold you in my

arms.

If you were to write a letter to your mother about your relationship with her, what would *you* say? For an example of just such a letter, turn to page 10 and read “Dear Mother,” a moving, painfully authentic story in a voice that speaks for a great many daughters.



Mothering Ourselves, Finding Other Mothers

“I have to be my own mother,” Anne Frank wrote simply and truthfully. However close and satisfying your relationship with your mother may have been, there are many things about the world that she could not teach you. This world is different from the world her mother taught her about, and her experiences as a woman, while valuable and helpful, cannot enable you to meet all of your challenges.

How do we mother ourselves? That is, how do we define and validate female values in the competitive, male-oriented worlds in which we live and work? To whom do we turn for guidance and answers to questions that our mothers may not have been able to provide—may not, in fact, have been able to imagine? From whom do we seek nurture and support, love and kinship?

Each woman does it differently, of course. Reflect on these questions for a moment, and then write about your own self-mothering and the women who have nurtured you. Like your own mother, they are a vital presence in your life. They have helped to make you the woman you are.

- ◇ Who were the women who helped me earn my education and succeed academically?
- ◇ Who were the women who showed me how to become a success in my work or professional life and who gave me a glimpse of female authority and power?
- ◇ Who were the women who taught me about friendship and fidelity?
- ◇ Who were the women who encouraged my creativity and helped me express my artistic and creative energies?
- ◇ Who were the women who guided my spiritual search, or lit a lamp

A mother is not a person to lean on but a person to make leaning unnecessary.—Dorothy C. Fisher

Few women growing up in our patriarchal society have been mothered enough; the power of our mothers, whatever their love for us and their struggles on our behalf, is too restricted.
—Adrienne Rich

And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see—or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read.—Alice Walker

Nurturing one another is what it's all about.—
Marianne Williamson

Looking Ahead

Each issue of the *SCJ* is loosely organized around a particular theme. We urge you to submit your brief essays, poetry, and book reviews on these themes, as well as your favorite women's quotations. But we also invite your non-theme writing, so please share! Send for our Writers' Guidelines.

August, 1999—Sisters & Sisterhood (deadline July 15, 1999)

November, 1999—New Beginnings (deadline October 15, 1999)

February, 1999—Simple Pleasures (deadline January 15, 2000)



True Words from Real Women

In this section of each Story Circle Journal, we publish your contributions of poetry and prose. Write for our Writers' Guidelines, limber up your ballpoint pen (or your typewriter or computer) and send in your contributions. We want to hear from you!

My Mother...

has always been Super Mom. She went back to work in a factory when my little sister started first grade and was still able to juggle everything perfectly. When we were growing up, we had hot breakfasts every morning, with a special "oatmeal song" that she would sing as she added butter, sugar, milk, and raisins. We always had homemade desserts. She made cookies in batches of 24 dozen, just for the family. When we were young, she sewed all of her own clothes, our clothes, and outfits to match for our dolls. As we got older, she sewed our prom dresses, and made me the wedding dress of my dreams. She read to us every day and led family roasaries every night. Each of us had a personalized song that Mom would sing to us before we fell asleep. Mine was "Erin Rose," sung to the tune of "Lida Rose," from *The Music Man*...

At the beginning of every summer, she'd buy us workbooks and would review the assigned pages with us when she got home from work each day. Then she'd sign and date the pages as if it had been an assignment from school. We were also expected to learn new vocabulary words every day and use them in conversation to show we had mastered them. My sisters and I would sit around the dinner table saying things like: "You seem to be in an affable mood tonight" and "Yes, I had an amiable afternoon at the pool."

Although Mom always expected us to be respectful, she never thought we should be conventional. When we were young, she was the only mother we knew who wore eyeshadow, or who loved Bruce Lee movies. When I was in fifth grade, she wrote a note to the librarian, giving me permission to use her adult card to check out any book I chose. When I was in eighth grade, she convinced Dad to try Transcendental Meditation. Then they arranged for each of us to have lessons...

Whenever Mom would say or do something that we thought was terrible, she'd say what her mother had said to her: "As I am so you shall be; prepare yourself to follow me." It would freak us out because we were afraid it might be true. Now I'm starting to wonder. Mom dressed me in baby blue to bring out the blue in my eyes. This caused tears as I got older and didn't want to look like a baby. Of course, now that I have a son with blue eyes, when I shop for him I find myself buying something blue. Mom and I both love shopping for new pens and notebooks, especially every September, even though it has been years since either of us has been in school. Just like Mom, I find myself lost 15 minutes into any TV show, saying things like "Who's he?" and "What happened to that other guy?" I guess I will turn out just like my Mom—if I'm lucky.

Erin Philbin Boyle
Pittsburgh PA

Dear Mother,

For you *are* my mother, though not always dear to me. We resemble each other in ways I have just begun to see, and often do not like. For most of my life I looked like Dad. But at his funeral, a relative told me, "You look like Mom." Silence. "By the way, that's a compliment," she added, when she saw the look on my face.

When I hurry past a mirror, I see the hunted look in your eyes, only they are my eyes now. You have passed on your fears to me. You taught me that I would need a man to take care of me, even if it meant putting up with abuse. Your advice when I was hurt was to not let it bother me. When I grew up, men—partners, lovers, even sons—would hurt and abuse me. It did not occur to me to tell them to stop. It did not even enter my mind that I had a right to their respect.

I feel guilty for being angry at you, an old woman. I feel guilty because I know you are afraid, and I know how you feel. I know how it feels to be afraid of strangers, afraid to take responsibility for my own life. I understand the agoraphobia you lived with in your forties, because I've had panic attacks driving in the middle lane of a six-lane expressway. When you are confused and rambling, I interrupt because I need to correct you. But then I realize that it does not matter. You are soothing yourself when you ramble on. It's very hard to be clear, for all of us, and very scary, for many of us.

So you are my mother, and I am your daughter. For better or worse, I must accept my own insecurity if I am ever to have compassion for yours. There is very little time, I think, although your mother lived to 94, childlike and fearful too. If I learn to forgive you, then I may be able to forgive myself for being afraid. For not being strong enough to not let it bother me.

Yet on some lovely days, I am strong and confident and happy, seeing that people are often good and safe and kind, and that when they are critical they are often just projecting their own fears and imperfections. Some days, I feel like I am swimming upstream through molasses, but on other days I glide easily along. I am learning to understand what triggers my pain and why.

Once you told me that you don't believe in astrology because we are both Scorpios and we are not at all alike. That made me happy, but now I'm not so sure. Maybe there are some things about you that I'd like to carry on. Maybe when I get past the molasses, I will be able to see them.

Sometimes, when I walk past a mirror, I catch myself smiling. You have a nice smile too, Mother...

Linda Wisniewski
Doylestown PA

The Fats of Life

Mamma taught me all she knew about the “Fats of Life.” She had learned them, no doubt, from her own Mamma. The same rich foods were served at Grandma’s house whenever we went there to visit. “Everyone needs a stick-to-the-ribs breakfast,” Mama used to say. This included anything that could be thrown into a pan and fried: bacon, eggs, hash browns, pancakes, french toast, and even her homemade doughnuts. Along with it, we drank a big glass of creamy whole milk poured from the high-necked bottle delivered by the milkman.

Mama fixed lunches while we ate breakfast. Oleomargarine was spread on two slices of soft white bread. (Remember mixing the yellow dot of color into the greasy white chunk of oleo to make it look like butter?) A filling of bologna, eggs or peanut-butter was tucked between the slices. The sandwich and a cookie were popped into a brown bag.

Dinner was a meat, potato, and gravy affair, in deference to Dad. Mamma never prepared things like pasta or salad (“rabbit food,” Dad called it). Of course, we always cleaned our plates to avoid the lecture about the poor, starving children of the world.

Mamma taught me well, for I served similar meals to my own growing families... It came as no surprise when Dr. Dan, our family physician, diagnosed my high-blood pressure problem. Since my grandparents and parents had been afflicted too, he observed that it was a genetic problem and prescribed a little white pill. There was no counseling on altering my diet, no advising me to start an exercise regimen.

Today my children, who have their own families, are now teaching *me* about the “no-fats of life.” These young Mammams serve healthy meals which include pasta, salad, fish and chicken....It will be interesting to see if these changes in diet and exercise will influence the “genetic” medical problems in the family....

Phyllis Gobreski
Lafayette IN

Growing

No longer young,
Yet not quite old,
I hang suspended
Between what I was
And what I am becoming.

The fractured, frightened child
Must realize that what’s ahead
is greatly up to her.
How she meets each moment,
each life event,
Is shaping her, still.

She must let go the past and realize
That somewhere along the way
She grew up.
The scars, though real,
Are mostly healed.

“Integrate,” whispers my soul.
“You—not young, not old—and
the little child are one.
Dare to live your life.
Dare to taste the joy.
Dare to love your Self.”

Marsha Fowler
Austin TX

<p>This membership is a gift. My name and address:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Please send me ____ free copies of the <i>Story Circle</i> brochure to share with family, friends, or clients.</p>	<p>Join the Story Circle Network! One year, USA \$20; Canada & Mexico, \$26; Elsewhere, \$30</p> <p>Here is my check for \$_____. I want to join the Story Circle Network and receive four issues of <i>The Story Circle Journal</i>.</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____</p> <p>Foreign memberships: International Postal Money Order only please</p> <p>Mail to Story Circle Network, P.O. Drawer M, Bertram TX 78605</p>
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For Life Writing Teachers....

Writing About Mother's Pretties

by Dianne Lodge-Peters



“Joan talks about the sense of light and openness she tries to achieve for Erik, and I recognize familiar brightly colored pieces of art and handcraft from one house to the next, but they are always artfully recombined, each object at rest in its new place.” [Joan is the wife of psychologist Erik Erikson. The “I” who recognizes Joan’s artistic achievement is Mary Catherine Bateson, in her book, *Composing a Life* (NY: Plume, 1990).

Although the relationship between my mother and me was usually distant, we seemed close when it came time to pack and unpack our household goods for yet another move to another Massachusetts mill town. My Mum’s full name was Dorris Alice Wood Speed (two r’s in Dorris; Mum was persnickety about the spelling), and I remember her most vividly when I look at her “pretties”: the plates on the red brick wall above my hearth, the glass heron on the bathroom windowsill, the tiny green porcelain bud vase that sits on my vanity table just as it sat on hers. My Mum, Dorris, was the Joan Erikson who showed me not only how to pack and unpack the legacy of pretties for the family’s several moves, but also—again like Joan Erikson—how to recombine them artfully so that each new place spelled home. Mum’s plates may once have hung in kitchen-dining rooms, but my grandsons and I snack in full view of the hearth while we catch up on family stories. The glass heron is always somewhere near a bathtub so I can lie back and watch it refract the light. And the bud vase on the vanity reminds me that Mum set great store by personal grooming.

Such household artifacts as these are “homely.” They say you’re in a place where you belong. They are the pieces of precious gemstone cut from the ore of family, the exquisite sensory details that enrich memoirs and life stories.

* * * *

To help participants uncover motherlode veins of memory in workshop settings, consider the following suggestions as starting points for your group’s activities:

The naming of names

Ask participants to write down the full names of five women who mothered them. (My definition of *mother* also

includes aunts and grandmothers back through the generations as far as possible, as well as women mentors and certain friends.) In unison, shout out every name on every list. Separately, in turn, speak the names on each list out loud. Then ask them to speak one name and identify that woman in terms of relationship (mother, mentor friend). Finally, choose an artifact that this woman displayed in her home or workplace and write a paragraph describing that artifact in its setting (3-5 minutes). Share the paragraphs with the group and talk about them. For a take-home assignment, or for additional in-class writing, write four paragraphs, each describing the artifacts from the other four “mothers.”

Artifacts as leftovers from earlier places, earlier lives

Ask participants to sketch (in pencil, charcoal, markers, crayons, etc) a favorite artifact in its original setting (such as Mother’s house). Ask them to take another sheet and sketch the artifact in a later setting (their homes or workplaces). Have them write 2-3 paragraphs comparing and contrasting the two sketches, and a final paragraph exploring the significance of this. Share the paragraphs. On a sheet of newsprint, create a collage of the sketches. Photograph the group with its collage.

Artifacts as characters in family or life stories

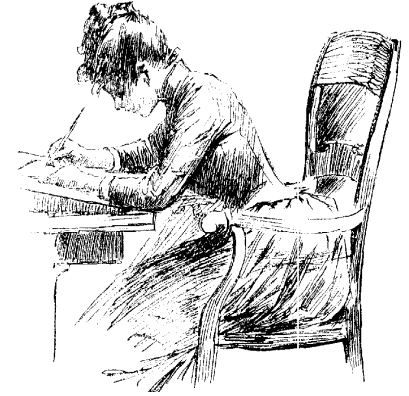
Examples: a grandmother’s sewing basket hides a family tragedy. A little wooden matchbox is in reality a Dear-John letter. A pair of cufflinks represents an unwanted legacy. Ask participants to select a favorite family artifact and write a story about the object’s travels along a pathway through 2-4 household moves (or over 2-3 generations). Share the stories. Then make up a new story, fictionalizing the facts by answering the question: “What if the artifact had been left behind? What if it had gone to another person?”

For discussion: First Person Singular

Reliability, trustworthiness, and truthfulness are important attributes for the memoirist, but the story may be stronger if the writer reshapes the facts into a fiction. Which facts can be fictionalized? For what purpose? What are the boundaries to fictionalization in a memoir? What are the limitations of truth?

Books for the Journey

In each issue, we'll review one or more books that teach us something important about women's stories. Some will be related to the theme of the issue, others will simply be books we couldn't resist. If you have a favorite book you'd like others to know about, write for our Reviewers Guide. We welcome your reviews!



Harvesting Your Journals: Writing Tools to Enhance Your Growth and Creativity, by Rosalie Deer Heart and Alison Strickland, Heartlink Publications, San Cristobal NM: 1999.

Have you ever wondered what to do with those stacks of old journals you've been keeping under your bed or hidden in the back of your closet? Of course, all of us dip into our journals from time to time, pondering our old passions and marveling at our personal ancient history. What we don't do, unfortunately, is to work systematically with our journals. That's what ***Harvesting Your Journals*** is all about—a guide to help you “harvest” the experiences, hopes, dreams, and plans you have jotted down over the years, a way to help you map your life changes and gain a clearer sense of who you are. As you review your own journals, this book will help you strengthen your understanding of your own personal history and map the turning points of your journey.

I liked this book for several reasons. The first was the helpful advice the authors offer for “stepping into” our journals and examining our past lives. “You'll be encountering parts of yourself that can then be gathered in to make you more whole,” they say, and suggest that we maintain a committed, curious, humorous, and compassionate attitude toward these old selves. They invite us to look to our journals for themes (such as body image, friendships, dreams, aging), questions (What accounts for love? How do I nourish my soul in the midst of life's demands?), and motifs (forgotten dreams, key turning points, times when you broke your silence and spoke your truth). I also like it because it is such a deeply personal book. The authors share not only their journals but also their deep friendship, and as a reader, I felt strengthened by both.—*Cassandra Jacobs, New Orleans LA*

Deep Water Passage: A Spiritual Journey at Midlife, by Ann Linnea, Pocket Books, NY 1993.

Our Story Circle Reading Circle (in Austin TX) read this book and thoroughly enjoyed it. It is the story of a 43-year old woman who kayaked around Lake Superior in search of the rest of her life. It was a summer-long journey—65 days of incredible challenge, of angry storms, high seas, and painful physical trials. But more than that, it is a journey into the soul of a woman who is willing to risk all that she already knows about herself (as a wife, a mother, a friend) in order to learn what she does *not* know about her own inner resources. “When we deliberately leave the safety of the shore of our lives,” Linnea writes, “we surrender to a mystery beyond our intent.” It is within the circle of those mysteries, beyond any willed intention on our parts, that transformation takes place. As readers of this memoir of courage and physical challenge, members of our Circle felt that we too had surrendered to the mystery of the journey, and were transformed by it.—*Susan Albert*

Sometimes, as I sit listening quietly within, it seems as if the very air in the house has been transformed...a hush of tranquillity, an attitude of devotion filling every room—
Judith Duerk

*When we exist at the core of ourselves, we're departing from how we normally exist. We're bringing the heart, mind, body, and soul into focus and being present with them in a particular way: doing it on purpose, doing it with unconditional acceptance, and doing it with deep attentiveness.—*Sue Monk Kidd

If one becomes utterly still, the earth will speak in a language that can be understood.
—Ann Linnea

*To grow beyond the expectations we're raised with is a radical act necessary to the claiming of one's full self.—*Ann Linnea

A Story Circle News Roundup

Good stories have the power to save us.... We can all make a difference by simply sharing our stories with real people in real times and places.—Mary Pipher

The Story Circle Board of Directors has just approved guidelines for forming an official chapter of the Story Circle Network, and a set of Bylaws for the Austin Circle Chapter which may serve as model bylaws for any group that would like to form a chapter. If you are considering starting a Story Circle chapter in your area, they will be of help to you. We'd love to know if you have plans for Story Circle activities, so please do keep us posted!

Guidelines for Creating an Official Chapter of the Story Circle Network

1. The group of women should be familiar with the Story Circle Network and in agreement with its purpose and scope.
2. The group should be interested in forming an ongoing organization that holds regular meetings.
3. Before applying for recognition from the national organization, the group should:
 - a. Contact the Story Circle Network office to obtain names of members in the local area. Invite those who are not currently members to join both the national and the newly-forming local Circle. This meeting might be a social gathering for women to meet each other and discuss the purpose of the organization and what attendees hope to gain from it. Someone should agree to serve as a facilitator for this gathering and for the meetings described below.
 - b. Establish bylaws and general structure of the organization. Depending on the size of the group, this can be done by the whole group or a few interested women.
 - c. The bylaws should contain:
 - A Mission Statement for the group
 - Specific membership requirements
 - List of officers and responsibilities
 - Specifics on types of programs to be held
4. After the bylaws have been agreed to by the members of the group, they should be submitted to the Story Circle office for approval by the board.

The Austin TX Circle Chapter of the Story Circle Network Mission Statement and Bylaws

Mission Statement

The Austin Circle Chapter seeks to further the purpose of the Story Circle Network by helping women in the Austin area share the stories of their lives through women-focussed circles. These circles may include, but are not limited to, writing, reading, and/or telling stories to gain deeper understandings of their own lives.

ByLaws

Membership and Meetings

- Membership is open to any woman who belongs to the Story Circle Network.
- In addition to its regular program activities, the Austin Circle Chapter will hold an annual business meeting and an annual social event designed to recruit new members.
- Dues will be determined by the members at an annual organizational meeting.
- Women must be members in good standing (have paid dues for the current year) to vote at the organizational meeting.

Officers and Responsibilities

Initially, three officers will be elected for the Circle. By a simple majority, the Circle may add officers and/or committee chairs as needed. The officers include, but are not limited to:

- *Circle Leader*: Responsible for facilitating each meeting, or for appointing someone in her place. The Circle Leader is responsible for seeing that ongoing programs are planned.
- *Circle Publicity*: Responsible for notifying members of meetings and program schedule.
- *Circle Treasurer*: Responsible for collecting dues and making disbursements as required.

Programs

- Programs will be consistent with the mission statement.
- Programs will be determined by the membership. Any member may suggest a type of program for the Chapter's consideration.
- Depending on interest, smaller groups may be established for specific types of programs: e.g., the Austin Reading Circle.

You may contact the Story Circle office by emailing us at china@tstar.net or writing to:

**The Story Circle Network
3710 Cedar St Box 11
Austin TX 78705**

Life Writing for Publication

A Primer for On-Line Journalers by Dayna Finet

In the last issue, I wrote about the advantages of on-line journaling. It's one of the most energetic developments in life-writing today, offering easier accessibility to readers (no gatekeeping publishers to tell you "no, thanks") along with a technology that's getting friendlier all the time. You can sample some on-line journals at *Diarist.net* (<http://www.diarist.net>) and *Metajournals* (<http://www.metajournals.com>) or through search engines like *Yahoo* (<http://dir.yahoo.com>, where you can link from "social science" to "communications," to "writing" to "journals and diaries") and *Mining Company* (<http://journals.miningco.com>, click on "online journals"). Seeing other women's online journals might just encourage you to publish your own.

So what do you do next? Read on.

Getting Good Advice

Diarist.net and *Metajournals* make a point of welcoming new on-line journalers with advice from folks who've been there. *Diarist.net* offers recent articles on aspects of on-line journaling; today I read there a useful piece on titling your on-line journal. The site also provides an archive of similar articles posted in the past. To get to this section, start at the *Diarist.net* home page. Click on "Diarist.net Guide" and then on "Start Up." *Metajournal's* help for beginning on-line journalers is located in the site's "Permanent" section, at the upper left-hand corner of its home page. The link to "Resources" gives advice on questions of on-line writing style, design, and technology. "Metalinks" connects you to other websites that also address these issues. *Metajournals* also maintains an archive of past issues, and on its home page, current articles about specific on-line journaling topics. One dealing with anonymity—which can be wise for on-line journalers—was full of great perspectives and ideas.

From Webmaster to Webring

Now you're ready to write for the web!

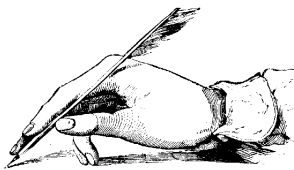
First, you'll need to create a web page—not so intimidating, really. You have two basic options. Hire a web page designer to do it for you. Or—my preference—be your own webmaster. Your regular word processing software may allow you to save files as web documents in HTML (the web's programming language). Or use software specifically designed for web writing, such as Webmaster, PageMill, or HomePage.

Now you want to find a web host for your journal. More choices. If you use an Internet service provider (ISP) it may give you some free web space where you can post your journal. Otherwise, you'll want to locate a host. Some web hosts charge for their service but many, like Geocities (<http://www.geocities.com>) are free. Uploading your journal to the web host isn't hard. Your web authoring program can probably do this, or you can download a free FTP (file transfer protocol) utility from the web, that you then use for uploading.

Finally, make sure that readers can find your journal on the web. List your site with one or more Internet search engines such as Yahoo, Mining Company, Infoseek, or Alta Vista, using their registration forms. And add your site to one or more journaling "webrings," so that people surfing other on-line journals will find yours, too. Both *Diarist.net* and *Metajournals* can help you to do this.

You can find more help for your initiation to on-line journaling in an article by Mitchell Bard ("Surf's Up for Writers," *Writer's Digest*, November 1998).

Dayna Finet is a writer living in Austin TX. She serves on the Story Circle Board of Directors and is Co-Director of the OWL-Circle Project.



Dear Pen Partner...

Stories mean a great deal more when they're shared. If you'd like a pen partner, send us your name and address, or write to one of these Story Circle members:

Patricia R. Hall (Pat), 2494 Imperial Street, Salt Lake City UT 84106
Carla Jones 620389, Rt 2 Box 600, Marlin TX 76661
Alexandra A. Roy, Rt 2 Box 83W-2, Killeen TX 76542
Lynn Mills, 7323 S. Mooresville Rd, Indianapolis IN 46221

Story Circle's New & Renewing Members

We extend a very special welcome to the women who have joined our Network or renewed their membership since the beginning of 1999. We're glad to be a part of your story—and hope that you'll become an active part of ours!

Alabama

Dianne Lodge-Peters, Evergreen

Arkansas

Beverly Litzinger, Fayetteville
Catherine Crews, Dover
Lucy L. Abraham, Little Rock

California

Duffie Bart, Monterey
Nancy Benbow, San Diego
Suzanne Crothers, San Andreas
Pat Browning, Hanford
Charlene Depner, Oakland
Mary Tuchsherer, Oakland
Kathy Dillon, Frontera
Sheila P. Thompson, Frontera

Georgia

Audrey Galex, Atlanta
Geraldine Jones, Blue Ridge

Illinois

Lavona Johnson, Libertyville

Indiana

Barbara Bose, Speedway
Lynn Mills, Indianapolis

Kansas

Marie Scoville, Hillsboro

Louisiana

Jan Matamoros, Baton Rouge

Maine

Christina Leavitt, E. Millinocket

Maryland

Tamara Zachakiw, Potomac

Massachusetts

Gail Anne Godio, Sandisfield

Michigan

Judith Fettman, Ann Arbor

Montana

Jenna Caplette, Boseman

New Mexico

T.J. Reilley, Mesilla
Andrea Horner, Santa Fe

New York

Pamela Priest, Webster
Jennifer Olson, New York
Susan Peters, Slingerlands
Renee Cassese, Seaford

Ohio

Marlene Cintavy, Barberton
Helen Sadler, Macedonia
Denise M. Bell, Flat Rock

Oklahoma

Joyce Hogan, Tulsa

Pennsylvania

Lori Dafilou, Glenside
Carolyn Guss, Ardmore
Erin Boyle, Pittsburgh

Texas

Judy Rohde, Austin
Barbara Peters, San Antonio
Amanda Childers, Friendswood
Martha Fleming, San Antonio
Sharon Zambrzycki, Austin
Dianne S. Meyer, Houston
Leanne N. Pitts, Gatesville
Alafair B. Kane, Houston
Penny Appleby, Austin
Leilani Rose, Austin
Nancy Tynan, Houston
Carla Jones, Marlin
Margaret Baacke, Austin
Lydia Griffith, Austin
Jane Basey, Austin
Jeanie Forsyth, Austin
Carolyn Cowan, Austin
Linda Webster, Austin
Elizabeth Davis, Austin
Alexandra Roy, Killeen
Kay Axtmann, N. Richland Hills
Mary Lee Harris, Round Rock

Vera Preston, Austin

Tricia Stephens, Southlake
Leila Jordan, Port Arthur
Madeleine Lachman, Austin
Eula Rae McCown, Austin
Jennifer Bacchi, Austin
Linda Watkins, Georgetown
Nan Richards, Plano
Mary Hermes, Austin
Pat Lovell, Austin
Mary Nagai Jacobson, San Marcos
Barbara Weeks, Austin
Toody Byrd, Austin
Mary Allbrecht, Austin
Donna Meadows, Austin

Utah

Pat Hall, Salt Lake City

Virginia

Martha Doss, Lexington

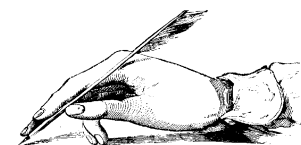
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Annette Howards, Madison

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FIRST CLASS



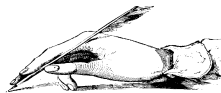
did not run readers' stories in May—add to August

Our Readers Share Their Stories....

Alexandra Roy of Killeen TX, says, “My past, which includes a 26-year marriage and a 1 1/2 year-marriage (both ending in divorce), my parents’ deaths, and multiple geographical relocations, has taught me that I am a survivor and adventurer whose life journey has taken many unexpected turns that has always proved positive in some way or another. I am now in a transition phase of (?temporary?) retirement, working with my quarterhorse and exploring what I truly want to do with the rest of my life and where I want to do it..”

Carla Jones of Marlin TX is also searching for her true desires. “I have spent the past 20-plus years abusing my body and soul, allowing others to do the same. I want to find out what I’m capable of, what my passions are, what I truly like and dislike. I’ve been in my own personal prison and I’m ready to free myself. My past is giving me the power to seek the things that move my spirit. This is a new experience for me; exciting, yet frightening.”

Story Circle to help her find a focus for her search. “I have been mulling over writing my life story for some time, but have not done anything about it except mull it over. I decided to join the Story Circle to give some structure to my amorphous thoughts and provide a place to start.”



Lynn Mills, Indianapolis IN: “I have always considered myself a writer, although most of my writing is actually editing a small church-related women’s magazine. I am beginning to work with Susan Albert’s book, *Writing From Life*, and am enjoying the self-discovery that happens along the way.”