

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close & Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 12, SUMMER 2014

SAGE-ING

WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

KNOW YOURSELF. BE YOURSELF. LOVE YOURSELF. SHARE YOURSELF.



A PUBLICATION OF THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT www.sageing.ca

Creative Aging Awareness Day

"Everyone has the urge to create. Its expression may flow through many channels...The point is to honour the urge. To do so is healing for ourselves and for others; not to do so deadens our bodies and our spirits." – Vancouver MD Gabor Maté

At the Rotary Centre for the Arts, we continually strive to improve the economic, cultural and social quality of life in the community by fostering the participation in, and appreciation of the arts. We are a unique City of Kelowna facility in which individuals of all ages and backgrounds can come together to share in the excitement of strengthening art and culture in the Okanagan. We collaborate with government, business, community groups and individuals in the development of the arts. Participation in the arts is a path to improved health, healing and wellbeing. Creative Aging Awareness Day, June 20th, 2014, celebrates the creative work and achievements of our community's older adults, promotes creative aging programs, features positive images of seniors in the community and builds respect and understanding between generations. The Rotary Centre for the Arts is building the arts health connection to lead in the creation of healthy community.

There is a connection to the self and improved wellbeing that happens once an individual becomes aware that their art making is in fact a dialogue with themselves. They awaken to the wonderful gallery of thoughts, emotions and feelings carried within and seeking release into a physical form, whether it is visual, literal or through movement. The day will inform, inspire and encourage citizens to find new meaning in their lives as they age. The process of aging is a profound experience marked by increasing physical and emotional change and a heightened search for meaning and purpose. Creative expression is important for older people of all cultures and ethnic backgrounds, regardless of economic status, age, or level of physical, emotional, or cognitive functioning.

"Creative aging is about possibilities, freeing ourselves of limiting beliefs about aging and embracing the reality that individuals continue to grow, learn and contribute to their communities throughout the life journey." – Pat Spadafora, Sheriden Elder Research Centre

Rotary Centre for the Arts

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A PUBLICATION OF THE

Okanagan Institute

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Cover painting detail by Julie Elliot

FROM THE EDITORS

With the upcoming September issue, we enter our fourth year of publishing the *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace & Gratitude* journal. Over 180 writers, from many creative disciplines, have contributed to the pages of this non-profit, quarterly Journal with stories from their often ordinary, yet extraordinary lives. The paintings that grace the pages are a meditation for the soul. The writers and poets come from the Okanagan, throughout British Columbia, across Canada, the U.S., even Europe. Their stories are remarkably similar. Familiar themes emerge again, and again, as contributions arrive for each journal. We feel we have tapped into a public and common source of knowledge, consciousness, and wisdom, if you will, related to creativity, the arts, and aging. As we read through every article for the upcoming issue, at least one, usually two writers state unequivocally the essential role that creativity has played in their life; their need to express from within. Creativity is the oxygen that sustains them. You seldom hear that expressed in the workaday world. Yet, our pages are filled with these stories. The Journal seems to fill a public and creative need.

As expressed in the following pages of this issue, the legacy of Daphne Odjig affirms: 'Creatively expressing who you are, allows a comfort zone in which to grow old.' The Journal begins with the account of twenty-three year old Noni who smiles bravely as she creatively explores the dramatically altered world to rediscover herself. Writer and photographer, Jeff Stathopoulos brings form to his emerging perceptions. Cathryn Wellner heralds hope, and Robert MacDonald examines love.

We hope you enjoy reading the Summer journal with its diverse stories, and beautiful artwork, as much as we did compiling and publishing it. It is a very special conclusion to our third year of publication.

Karen Close and Carolyn Cowan, Editors
Robert MacDonald, Publisher

[Wood Lake Publishing has printed special copies of this 12th issue of Sage-ing. If you are interested in a purchase please contact \[sageing4@gmail.com\]\(mailto:sageing4@gmail.com\)](#)

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TO THE EDITORS

I have been caring for my 92 year-old Mom in my own home for ten months now. She is coming to the end of her life, and her days are now spent primarily in bed. What I marvel at is that her mind continues to create. Despite being completely blind and very frail, she tells me that she wants to open a store. We talk at length about what she would put in it, the types of people who would come to see her, how it is designed and how this has always been her dream. She never lets go of the possibility that this could be so and I watch her eyes light up as she expresses her desires. "I want to walk with a black lab", she tells me with great fervor, "Where can we find one?" I know she is imagining the walks she used to have with her two big labs when she was young, but as she speaks, it feels like the earth is beneath her feet, and she can sense the wonder of those many adventures again in her mind.

I began my career at fifteen working with seniors as a care aide in a Kelowna care facility. It struck me at that young age that people of advancing maturity were very special. They had wonderful stories to tell and their wisdom shone brightly from their eyes. You only had to stop, slow down and give them the time to listen to what they had to share to see it. I have come full circle now as I am again surrounded by the creative wisdom of the many elders I work with. Becoming an elder now myself has led me to really explore and come to know myself as I truly am. With hair as white as my Mom's now, my spirit has grown even more alive with the will to keep creating. Having started my own business at the age of 61, I now gather elders in workshops that offer an opportunity to explore what I call *A Path To Elderhood*. Here, all are encouraged to express where they may have held themselves back from fully realizing what their natural essence is. By joining with others and sharing openly, they come to a clearer understanding of where they may

be holding themselves in regret or judgement. By acknowledging what is sometimes called their shadow, they walk through a door into a new sense of aliveness and freedom to be more of who they really are. It seems as they face the fear that may have led them to live in a role or persona that never really fit, it takes them back to a memory when truly being themselves creatively was suppressed through criticism, lack of encouragement, or harsher punishment by someone who did not realize the consequences of their actions. Through sharing and engaging together, I watch as a well of energy begins to flow between the workshop participants and the room is filled with the joy of new ideas and creative imagination. It is marvelous to see each person step out of the ordinary into the extraordinary, even for a moment.

I do believe it is our imagination and connection to our authentic spirit that keeps life worth living. Marcel Proust has stated that "the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes". Conscious Eldering is answering a call to return to the real you so that you might share the wonder of your uniqueness with the world, no matter what your age.

Your Journals are an inspiration to travelling the third stage of life with hope, joy, enthusiasm and gratitude for the life you have lived in the past and will live in the future, with all of its crooks and crannies. Thank you so much for sharing the stories of so many creative souls who are experiencing discoveries through new eyes as they age. They act as mentors for those who are still seeking their own paths to embracing elderhood with optimism and generosity. It is wonderful!

With gratitude,
Marjorie Horne
Dipl.T. Nursing, Eldercare Consultant,
Certified Professional Consultant on Aging
www.caresmart.ca

NONI'S STORY



Lori Kline left with daughter Noni right

Lori Kline

Noni came into the world on an unseasonably warm afternoon, October 21st, 1990. She and I both cried for the first hour of her life – mine were truly tears of joy. I had wished, prayed, and hoped for my girl, and at last she was there in my arms. Like her older brother and younger sister, Noni had an idyllic childhood. She was blessed with intelligence, creativity, and a wry sense of humor. As her childhood blossomed, it became obvious that Noni was, indeed, a gifted student. Her creativity flourished; she wrote poetry, stories, and musicals; she cartooned; she created dollhouse miniatures, including microscopic plates of spaghetti and meatballs. She played the piano beautifully.

In French Immersion, she won top academic awards in both Elementary and Middle School. Thus, it was no surprise to anyone when she was eager to pursue a three-month exchange program in France, starting in February of 2005. The afternoon that Noni was due to leave Smithers, in north western B.C., her flight was cancelled because of a snowstorm. That night I lay down with her on her bed, grateful for the bonus time. She was only 14 years old, and Amboise, France, seemed like it was on another planet! I was so surprised when Noni confided to me that she really didn't want to go on the exchange. I attributed her words to last minute jitters – a kind of stage fright. After reassuring her, I kissed Noni goodnight, never imagining how life could change. The following afternoon, Noni climbed the stairs of the little Dash 8 which would carry her for part of her journey, nine time zones away. She stopped and turned at the top of the steps, and raised her hand in farewell to me. I did the same behind a chain link fence. I have a photograph of that moment. It doesn't really matter that I do; I have that picture of her in my head and heart forever.

It is true what is said of the call in the middle of the night. After Noni had been in France for three months, as Sunday turned to Monday, the phone rang, ripping us from our dreams. Noni's French housemother, Emmanuelle, began rapidly firing questions at my husband Buzz. "Has Noni ever had seizures? Has she ever passed out without warning?" My heart hammered and my blood froze. Terror. Disbelief. Fear. Fear. Fear. Oh-so-painfully, the details unfolded. Noni was within five days of returning home. I had spoken to her the previous evening. Noni had loved her life in Amboise and told me that she didn't want to leave France. At her high school there, she was the popular Canadian girl with the "adorable accent". Although Emmanuelle was an English teacher, Noni insisted that the entire family speak only French with her. That Sunday night before her scheduled departure, Noni had had a sleepover with the two teenage girls in her host family. The girls awoke in the morning to the sound of Noni struggling. She had collapsed, and was

Majesty

Millions of tons of solid rock
Still standing after I am naught
But dust and memories
So powerful and immovable,
And yet so beautiful.

Love and life
And hopes and dreams
And millions of prayers
Beauty unsurpassed
By any living thing.
Watching o'er this land.
And smiling down upon us...
Radiating strength and beauty
These mountains
Are in my bones.

~ by Noni Kline, 2004, age 13, a year
before her visit to France

Her heart had stopped beating, but he revived her. Unfortunately, the damage was done. Noni's beautiful brain had been deprived of oxygen for just too long.

Noni's watercolours



desperately gasping for breath. She had turned blue, and lost consciousness. The girls frantically phoned their father at work. Jean-Louis is a physician. He ran from his office and burst into his home and saved Noni's life. Her heart had stopped beating, but he revived her. Unfortunately, the damage was done. Noni's beautiful brain had been deprived of oxygen for just too long. She remained in a coma – in another world, and so very far from home.

The next few days are a blur in my memory. Fueled by fear and activated by adrenaline, we made hasty arrangements to deliver me to Noni. I had to get to her; I prayed that she would wait for me. I didn't even have a passport. Our MP, Nathan Cullen, miraculously obtained it for me within 48 hours. There were such kindnesses and caring surrounding our family. Nothing, absolutely nothing, could have prepared me for the horrific vision of my beautiful girl when I arrived at the Children's Hospital in Tours, France. Tubes, wires, and machines were supporting Noni's life and were monitoring her responses. Noni lay on a hard, metal gurney, with only a sheet covering her. She could not breathe on her own. She could not swallow. Her eyes rolled back in her head. Noni showed no signs of recognizing me, but I was there. Oh, I was there. During the two weeks that followed, Noni developed a bubble in her lung, and was developing pneumonia. I kept vigil by her bedside, leaving only when I was banished to "la salle d'attente", the waiting room.

One particularly terrifying afternoon, a nurse was trying to remove Noni's breathing tube when Noni began to struggle and thrash, as if convulsing. A code was called, and I was ordered to the waiting room. After an eternity, the Doctor came to me. "Is she going to die?" I cried. "Not tonight", she replied. Surely, the Children's Hospital in Tours is like any other in the world. High above their ICU's, the children's spirits soar and glide, as they hold hands and look sorrowfully down on those who love them, who miss them, who mourn them. Noni was with all those children at that time. I so desperately wanted to join her. I did not want her to be afraid.

On May 2nd, an ICU Leer jet with a bilingual medical crew flew to France from Montreal. They flew our girl to Vancouver, where they were met on the tarmac by an ambulance. Noni spent four months in Children's Hospital. Her rehab at Sunny Hill was not progressing well, but she was discharged, and returned home to Smithers in late August, four months after she should have returned from the exchange trip.

Noni rested and recovered at home for a year, before finally returning to school in April, 2006. It was a less than triumphant return. Noni, who had been at the top of her class, was now in a Resource Room program, attending school for only a few hours a day. She took modified Art, Drama, and French classes. Noni battled crippling fatigue in those days. Her energy was further ravished by dramatic weight loss that she



Noni

Noni began to speak again and she began to play the piano, one note at a time.

could ill afford. But slowly, so slowly, with glacial speed, and with the arms of her family, friends, and community surrounding her, the new Noni emerged. Her gifts, so cruelly snatched, came back to her, in rationed amounts. Seven months after her injury, Noni began to speak again and she began to play the piano, one note at a time. When given a flashcard with one note on the staff, she was able to play the corresponding key on the piano. Noni took private dance lessons with a teacher blessed with compassion. She thrived in Art classes with her beloved friend, Heather, and in Drama classes, with her dear friend, Memory. It was

through the arts that I glimpsed Noni's soul.

Nine years have unfolded, bringing us all many gifts, most notably from Noni herself. Patience. Persistence. Dignity. Faith. Grace. Gratitude. These are the gifts that Noni has given me. There is a beautiful black and white photograph taken of Noni less than a week before her cardiac arrest. She has just broken through the surface of a pool, and is dazzling the camera with her absolutely gorgeous smile - triumphant, courageous, and oh-so-wise. I do believe that frame is frozen in time. It is the soul of Noni.

For two years, Noni has been painting what might seem like almost the same image week after week. It is of a blue sky above a horizon. Slowly the proportions have changed. Recently, Noni has become very vigorous as she paints the sky, letting her brush strokes speak and smiling "with her absolutely gorgeous smile - triumphant".

Editor's note: For the past two years Noni, with one of her support facilitators from Brain Trust, has been part of heART Fit, an intergenerational spontaneous process painting group. It meets weekly to paint, laugh and support each other on the human journey of creative awareness. Each week Noni's attendance enriches the gathering. Karen Close

Lori Kline is the proud mom of five, grammy of six, and Kindergarten Teacher of twenty-two children. Originally from Peabody, Massachusetts, just north of Boston, Lori was the seventh of eight children. She quips that her large Irish Catholic family was a low budget version of the Kennedy's. In 1979, Lori graduated from McGill University, Montreal, with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. She lived and taught in beautiful Smithers, B.C., for 29 years. It was there that Lori met her husband, Buzz, and helped to raise two wonderful step children, Deirdre and Michael. Lori and Buzz had three more children together - Zak, Noni, and Malley. Smithers, of course, has a special place in Lori's heart. It has been said that a small town is like a big family. That was certainly the case when Noni suffered the life-threatening and life-altering brain injury in 2005. The entire town wrapped the Kline family in arms of love, support, and faith. In the darkest of days, there was so much light. These days, in addition to teaching, Lori enjoys reading, writing, flower gardening, and laughing. She also loves to spend time with her family and little dog, Georgie. Lori and her family have called Kelowna home since 2008.

ART AS A JOURNEY

Jeff Stathopoulos



Art has given me the opportunity to sit back and contemplate my thoughts and feelings, and then choose how best to express them in a permanent form. With the spoken word, so much of what I say is in the moment. It's a reaction rather than an expression.

I've always seen art as the key to unlocking a path between our minds, hearts and the people around us. Verbal communication is a direct but fleeting medium; the things we say to others are soon forgotten, or at best survive without the exact context and form we used. Art has given me the opportunity to sit back and contemplate my thoughts and feelings, and then choose how best to express them in a permanent form. With the spoken word, so much of what I say is in the moment. It's a reaction rather than an expression.

As a child and through my teens, pencil, pen and ink were the tools I used to reflect the images in my mind. In those years, the world around me was new and fascinating. The driving force behind my art wasn't creating new visions, it was replicating the ones I saw before me. The closer I came to reproducing those images with my own hands, the closer I came to what I thought of as excellence.

With experience and age came a desire to interpret. I was no longer satisfied with simply copying the images I saw around me, I wanted to reflect my own unique perspective for others to see. The contrast between shadows and light, the opposing intentions of different angles, the flow of structure all captured my attention, but mostly, it was the contrast between the things we have built and the things we were given. I no longer wanted to produce static images. I wanted to capture a moment in time, and preserve it for others to see as I saw.

For the next twenty years, I moved from film, to digital, then to digital SLR. Often the world would seem an opaque copy of itself until an image would draw me in; then it would bloom in full colour and I would scramble to capture the moment.

I've always traveled, and the difference between my world at home, and the one beyond never ceases to amaze me. I've shot thousands of pictures, looking for that one perfect expression. A few have come close, some, while not what I had planned, were good images. Most were simply a way to fill up my hard drive.

I attended a photography course, and in the instructor's opening remarks he asked the class how many good photos they thought they could take from a roll of 36 exposures. He, then, polled the class and the responses, predictably, ranged from a low of 10 to a high of *all of them*. He smiled, and said he thought we were maybe less discriminating than we should be. He went on to say that if we were able to shoot a few decent photos from a roll, a couple of good images a year, and one great one in our lifetime, we should consider our work a success. His words have stuck with me for many years



Top: Paris Street Vendor - Paris, while unrivalled for its monuments and history, is best experienced through its people. One morning on our first trip, we watched as this man prepared his cart for the day's business with the attention and flare of an artist; as we approached, he quickly greeted us with a smile and words we did not understand, then urged us to sample his wares before we made a purchase.

Above: Central Park - I couldn't help but be drawn to the contrast of the high-rises in the background and the soft natural frame that the trees and grass create. Central Park is an oasis amidst the roar of New York.

and formed the basis on how I judge my work.

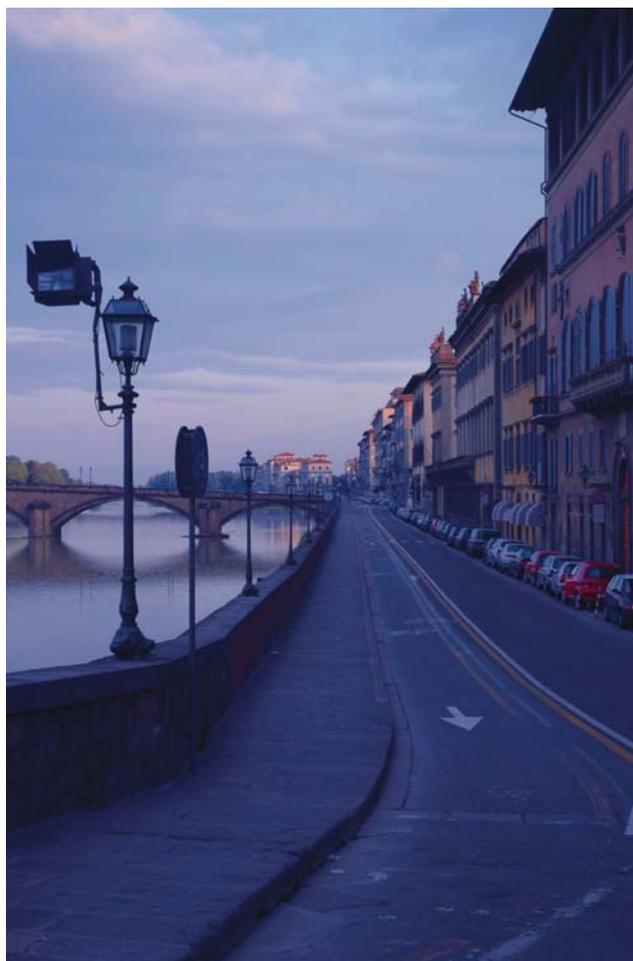
As I approached my fifties, I felt a desire to not only replicate and interpret the world around me, I now wanted to create it; to have a free hand in changing the things I didn't like or agree with, or simply wasn't attracted to. I wanted to build stories on the images and themes that I saw before me. There are truly great photographers out there who are able to tell an entire story with a single image, I am not one of them, although I wish that I were.

Once again I found myself with a pencil in hand and a blank sheet of paper before me, only this time it was the written word. Through a search I did online, I stumbled on a group called *Indie Ink*. They were a small community of amateur writers from all over the world who would each week put forth a hand crafted prompt. We would each then be given someone else's work and a week to create a piece of flash fiction from it. Part of the criteria was that you had your own blog to post the pieces to, so people in the group could read your

work. The posts were then judged and the *best* ones posted on the site. I did this for a year and found myself increasingly drawn to the mystery of fiction writing. The group ultimately disbanded, as these things often do, but my passion for writing carries on. I've stayed connected with some of the people that I wrote with, and am always amazed at how small a place this world really is.

So now I write. And while many think the writer's path is a lonely one, I once again have the privilege to meet inspiring, articulate people whose grasp of language leaves me in awe. Great words are more than simply a page in a book, they are physical; when you speak them they manifest themselves in sensation, they engage your mind and your heart and connect you to the world around you.

For me, I now understand that my artistic expression isn't unlike a competitive sport. I'm not competing with those around me, I'm not even competing with myself; my adversary is in the challenge to overcome the



limitations I have in producing a work that truly reflects what I feel.

Born and raised on the coast, Jeff lives in Kelowna with his wife Tanya, their two university-bound daughters and canine kids. Art, whether it's photography or the written word, provides a welcome respite from the day-to-day happenings of his day job as a Portfolio Manager and Wealth Advisor. Beyond art and career, they travel extensively, garden without surrender, practice yoga, and are insatiable readers. You can reach Jeff at j.stathopoulos@icloud.com or <http://therewrite.com> where he writes under the auspices of Billy Flynn.

Top left: Santorini, Greece - It's hard to take a bad shot on Santorini. This arch made me think of weddings and that step you take into the unknown as you begin life together.

Above: Santorini - I've always loved the frame that doors, windows and portals create of the world beyond them; the whitewashed stairs and walls drew my eye to the water below and the two masted sailing ship silently crossing through the image.

Top right: Blue Florence - Taken on a small street that runs along the banks of the Arno River in Florence, this was shot west of the Ponte Vecchio at the foot of the Ponte Santa Trinita, a bridge said to have been designed by Michelangelo.

BLOGGING FOR HOPE



Cathryn Wellner

Blame Madisen Harper. She is responsible for my tumbling head first into the world of blogging. The dynamic woman behind a company called “limitLess Life” had a lecture gig on the cruise ship bringing my partner and me back to Canada after six months in Australia. Her topic was digital publishing. We went out of curiosity.

“How many of you are writing a book?” she asked. Nearly every hand shot up. Harper had worked in publishing. She laid out the abysmal odds against our secret dreams of hitting the bestseller lists or even attracting a publisher. Then she asked the question that changed my life: “What is it you want to accomplish with your book? If you want to find an audience for your message, why wait? You can start tomorrow.”

The answer she proposed was digital publishing — Web sites, e-books and any other online options. My mind buzzed with possibilities.

Shortly after settling in back home in Kelowna, I contacted the woman I was planning a book with. We spent hours creating a map for it and more hours in a Seattle book store looking for similar kinds of books. As soon as our eyes fell on Patti Digh’s *Life Is a Verb*, we knew we had found the look and feel we were after.

That same visit, I met Tom Masters. He had just published *Blog to Book and Beyond*. We talked for two hours. I read his book. I was even more excited. Instead of spending months or years shopping a proposal to publishers, we could begin putting pieces of the book online.

I came back to Kelowna eager to start. When life heaped more challenges on my co-author than she could mix with blog or book writing, the project collapsed. But my blogging career had just begun.

StoryRoute was a natural place to start. I had spent a decade traveling as a storyteller and then another decade using storytelling as an integral part of community development consulting. A blog about the power of narrative allowed me to draw on all I had learned in those two decades.

The second blog, *Catching Courage*, had a more open-ended focus. I wrote about people who had touched my life and had a venue for sharing the poetry of talented friends. Some pieces from the abandoned project found their way onto the blog. I began building a solid audience, and then something unexpected happened.

The tender place where the initial book plan still lived collided with something broader. I had the sense the world was in a pickle. Climate change, environmental degradation, political corruption, economic malfeasance, violence and a host of other ills were eroding the planet and my soul.

I had the sense the world was in a pickle. Climate change, environmental degradation, political corruption, economic malfeasance, violence and a host of other ills were eroding the planet and my soul.



356. Kettin.
Scheherazad och Dinarzad.

Top: Queen Scheherazade as painted in the 19th century by Sophie Anderson

Above: Scheherazade and her sister Dinarzade – by Gustaf Thomée (1812-1878)

I needed an infusion of hope. Staying mired in what was wrong with the world felt self-indulgent. If I put what seemed right with the world on one side of a balance scale and what was evil on the other side, I was sure the good would flip the bad right off the scale.

I thought about Scheherazade, the clever woman who stopped a murderous Persian sultan in his tracks. After his wife betrayed him, he stopped trusting all women. He took a new consort each night and had her executed the next morning. Scheherazade volunteered to become his consort but begged one favour, that her sister be allowed to sleep at the foot of the bed, to say farewell. In the morning, the sister asked for one last story. Scheherazade timed it so she would reach the most exciting part just as the sultan needed to attend to his religious and political duties. He could not bear missing the ending so spared her life by one day. She continued her ruse through 1001 stories. By then he loved her more than he loved his anger.

That was it. I would blog 1001 stories.

Regardless of what Scheherazade did, why on earth I thought I could blog 1001 reasons for hope, escapes me now. But I figured if I could keep at it through 1001 posts, I might at least change one heart, my own. Had I done the math at the start, I would have quit before I started.

The first post on the This Gives Me Hope blog was about Anne the elephant, the abused circus elephant who had finally been given sanctuary. The second was about using guardian dogs to protect livestock instead of shooting predators. This was a sort of a hope-for-wildlife post. Then came a campaign to swear off plastic, a woman without arms who flies planes, a guy whose gift of a pencil led him to raise hundreds of thousands to build schools, a poet who became a best-selling sensation at 99.

I was on a roll, blogging every few days, when it hit me. 1001 posts could take me a decade if I did not step up the pace. So I switched to daily posts.

At the time, I was juggling contract work and writing for a major activist site. Both were paying gigs so Story Route and Catching Courage got put on the back burner while I earned money and wrote like mad. The more I got into the search for hope, the more ideas began accumulating on my computer. I had intended to write super-short posts, but they got longer. I wanted to know more about the amazing people and groups and even countries doing inspiring things. I did more research for each story, wrote longer pieces.

The months rolled on. Panic set in. I could not keep up the pace. Most of what I was writing for the activist site was shaking my fists at power. I felt a bit schizophrenic, drawing my sword to slash at the bad guys while wanting to call out the good guys. I was so buoyed by what I was finding that I actually gave up the paying gig rather than slow down the Hope pace.

That is when interesting things started to happen. I was connecting with extraordinary people around the globe, receiving tweets and e-mails and Facebook messages from people whose special deeds I was writing about. Via the wonders of the Internet, I connected with a woman who created an art



I think of blogging as shedding light.
Candela al buio – by Luca Casartelli

May 11, 2011, post #1 of This Gives Me Hope went live. On April 13, 2014, I posted #1001, in which I admitted I had become addicted to hope and was going to continue.

program for dementia patients, a boy who rocked TED with his critique of the food system, the head of a wildlife sanctuary who witnessed a bear heal a girl's spirit, a bill collector who put people back on their feet, a musician who left the high-rolling, hip-hop scene to perform for peace, and a village in India that planted 111 trees every time a girl child was born.

Even when I wanted to send up a white flag of surrender, to call it quits and slow down, I couldn't. Too many stories needed to be told. Every day I found more. People sent others. I was surrounded by hope.

So I started a Facebook page for This Gives Me Hope and began peppering it with links I could not find time to write about. I used Evernote to gather links for upcoming posts. I started pages on Scoop.it and Pinterest and began uploading links to other social media. I began planning an e-book series.

To keep up and give myself the occasional day off, I scheduled posts on WordPress, eventually staying three weeks ahead. Each day at 5 a.m., a post would go live. When I woke up, I would spend a quarter of an hour promoting it on various social media.

As the 1001st post drew nearer, Hope readers began asking what I planned to do when I reached my goal. They started worrying I would just stop. They wanted more.

And I wanted more. Hope had become a habit. I kept writing notes in Evernote about what I wanted to do after reaching my initial goal.

May 11, 2011, post #1 of This Gives Me Hope went live. On April 13, 2014, I posted #1001, in which I admitted I had become addicted to hope and was going to continue. I cut This Gives Me Hope to weekly posts. A new blog, Hope Habit, became the site for short bursts of daily hope as well as inspiring videos, books and music. On April 25th my partner and I threw a party to thank local supporters who had been making the journey with me.

Madisen Harper had no idea what she was setting in motion when she gave that shipboard talk, though I have had the chance to thank her. She set my life on a new path.

As addictions go, hope is a good one. I have written repeatedly about the power of the mind and the impact of intention. I know we can change the world if enough of us are determined to do so. I have the evidence of more than 1001 reasons for hope.

Cathryn Wellner has reinvented herself many times – French teacher, school librarian, itinerant storyteller, university instructor, community developer, arts organizer, retail store owner, communications consultant, and project manager. She has also spent years in gumboots, being followed around by sheep, pigs, and a couple of bull camels – all fuel for her book in progress, *The Reluctant Farmer* www.thereluctantfarmer.com She can still be startled by injustices and is grateful to have opportunities to write about them. At the same time, she knows of too many generous, brilliant, kind people to be pessimistic and blogs about them on www.thisgivesmehope.com and www.hope-habit.com

Twitter: @StoryRoute

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IN TIME, THE PASSAGE OF WHICH



Robert MacDonald

She was finally convinced.

It had not been an easy or effortless passage, and the journey had not been without its dangers and disappointments. She knew now that some of her dreams would not be fulfilled, by either herself or others, nor by the kind hand of fate. But she was easy in her heart about that. There was so much else to celebrate.

It wasn't one thing that convinced her. It was the many small mercies and memories of their days and nights, the built-up weight of love in their life together, the measure that she could make of tenderness, and of truth.

She could still clearly remember the first days, the stepping off into air, the letting go of fear, the reaching out for another. He was there. They were pilgrims suddenly, starting out on their journey of discovery, poking and probing each other, rushing excited into each others lives, into each others arms.

Somehow they managed to find common ground, high above their expectations. He was nervous and hesitant, she fearful. The waters they were emerging from were heavy with regret and recrimination, but they shook their naked bodies in the sun, and settled down on blankets, pressed breast to breast, and dared to dream.

In the early days, he would brag of his mental conquests, and she would be benign and forgiving. And when she would harden with fear, he would clasp her in his arms and rock her to the music of his love. They became friends, and dreamed of being lovers.

They learned to share. Slowly at first, but soon things passed between them without resistance. She learned to ask for respect, and he for intimacy, and they accepted them as gifts when given. They practised a magic craft in their ark of domesticity, conjured up rituals, made simple exotic meals, and lit candles for the darkness as the seasons changed. Their hands would often find each others, and clasped in a grip or gently touching, would form the connection they seemed to always need with each other.

An ocean of words passed between them, a slipstream of romance. He would read to her from the books he found in his searches, looking for the words that would open her heart and heal her wounds, that would bang the gong of her spirit, and wake her wise soul. They would talk of everything and nothing, and make plans, and change them constantly. They would become familiar with details, and not notice the passage of time.



In Time Place

Robert MacDonald is a designer, writer and publisher. He is the director of the Okanagan Institute, which contributes to the quality of creative engagement in the Okanagan through publications, events and collaborations. He writes and publishes the weekly newsletter, Freshsheet. He is also the Vice President of the Society for Learning in Retirement. Robert is the director of Proof, the Club for Creatives, which will open its doors this summer in Kelowna to facilitate social, culinary, collaborative and learning opportunities for creative individuals, groups and organizations.

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There were dark days. Things were said that could not be taken back, or forgotten. The air became thin and suffocating at times, or charged with the sharp electricity of recrimination, and a terrible distance would emerge between them. They would pick at each others scars, show blood, and menace.

But they too would heal, nursed by the pacts of understanding they learned to conjure from the darkness, soothed by the lotions of love they made in their laboratory.

As the years passed, the extraordinary became common. They became adept at reading each others moods and mannerisms, able to anticipate the rough spots in the road, learned to be there or not there as the circumstances required. Their bodies joined in many ways, and it became sometimes difficult to tell them apart. And apart, there seemed always to be

something missing, they were ill at ease and eager to leave and be joined again, to be whole again, elsewhere, alone and together.

And she did become beautiful, and had become wise, just as he had predicted.

She found a clear voice to speak of her hopes and dreams, her body and her spirit crested on the waves, her eyes shone with love and magic.

Once, on seeing her so, he fell down on the sand and cried for the many years he had waited and watched for her, the hopeless years that had tortured his face. When she found him there, a damp broken creature awash in the surf, she nursed him with love, and told him that they would always be together. That the past was harsh, and full of regrets, and unforgiving, but gone. And he, for the first time, believed her.

Best of all in many ways, they learned to travel well together, searching out memories that would strengthen their common and separate souls, in places where they could distance themselves from the cares of commerce and community. They walked over great vistas, and through dark sun-dappled forests, swam in strange seas, drove through history, picniced in tall grasses, explored lanes and shops looking for treasures and trinkets to take home with them and share with others, listened to voices raised in praise in cathedrals and concert halls, and lay together in hot dark rooms far from their home, and everywhere they went, and everything they saw and heard and felt, brought them closer together, and made them love each other more.

And, one ordinary day, she started to smile in her heart, and the world lit up around her, and the angels kissed her face, and she reached out and touched his sleeve, and she knew.

CREATIVE COOKING

Patricia Guest



Food has been my life. I grow it, write about it, protect it, try to save it, teach about it, cook it, create it and give it.

Igniting the spark in my life means firing up the six burners. From there, anything is possible. Even with only 10 ingredients, the world cuisines are at my fingertips. I seek new foods as a linguist seeks new words, root words are my vegetables, prefixes are my lamb, beef and chicken, bison, venison and suffixes are my herbs and spices. From these ingredients, stories are told, manuscripts written, and lives unfurl.

I carry the story of the woman who taught me to make ceviche in a tiny bar in Puntarenas, Costa Rica. The frustration we experienced when trying to figure out what *heenher aleh* was and our laughter when we found it to be Spanish for ginger ale. I can see the face and hear the young girl reciting the ingredients for her amazing salsa at a dusty diner on the side of the empty road near Batopilas, Mexico. I still repeat the ingredients in Spanish as I add them to the bowl. In the chaotic market of Antigua, I spotted a bowl of bright B.C. Red Delicious apples, and paid half my daily allowance for it. A stab of homesickness cored me when I bit into a soft mushy centre. I hold the memory of my neighbour, five years my senior, teaching me to make scrambled eggs with ketchup in them and my delight that they turned pink. My grandmother's voice "lift, turn, pushl, lift, turn pushl" echoes in my head and her genes run through my hands as I knead the stolen she made every Christmas. I keep her traditions and add my own. I recall in detail puking up Beef Stroganoff at a birthday party when I was seven. (Who makes Beef Stroganoff for seven-year olds?) and wondering what was in it. I learned what yogurt was and made yogurt and crepes at our Dutch friend's dairy farm. My memories are filled with food as is my life, my heart, my stories.

Food has been my life. I grow it, write about it, protect it, try to save it, teach about it, cook it, create it and give it. It has been my lifelong passion, the base for much of my creativity, writing, photography, cooking, floral design, landscape design and the foundation of most of my income. Looking back at this sentence gives me pause; I thought my life had been a tumultuous trip in a thousand different directions. In reality, aside from a brief altercation with financial planning, food has been my sustenance since my mom set me up with a small step stool I could climb upon to stir the custard on the stove safely when I was three.

As much as cooking is a creative outlet, it is the packaging of the experience that draws me to the kitchen and inspires me to search for new flavours and combinations. It is not only the story of the food itself, but of the people to whom I serve food and from whom I learn. It is the stories told around the family table, the laughter of friends sharing a plate of nachos and



If I dance when I cook, my food is happy.

The whole picture of agriculture, the destruction and capitalization of our food supply came into focus as I tilled the ground on a piece of dirt that was for sale for six million dollars.

the sense of community and connection that settles into our souls after a good meal is shared in good company. It is the story of the many creations and inspirations that a good meal has helped to foster the world over.

I recognized long ago that it is not cooking that is my passion, but food in all its forms and meanings. After returning from the mandatory rite of travelling for two years, I yearned to open a restaurant. Still unsure of my abilities to make it in such a competitive field, I chickened out and bought a market garden instead. The need to be around food was strong enough to make me want to weed for 10 years. Farming increased my reverence for food and the earth. The whole picture of agriculture, the destruction and capitalization of our food supply came into focus as I tilled the ground on a piece of dirt that was for sale for six million dollars.

GMOs (genetically modified organisms) came into the agricultural landscape in 1996. In 1997, I wrote my first article about their destructive qualities and how bad it was going to get for real food. My

course of activism, already loaded on the environmental bandwagon, became focused on food security, local sustainability, and educating people about our food supply. As I walked the parade path at the anti-GMO rally last year, I really felt like I had accomplished something. I didn't light the world on fire with my beliefs, but I put the word out, I walked it, talked it and taught it. That rally really reinforced the *one person at a time* maxim that will change the world in every way we want it to.

Each time I discover a new food, whether at the grocers, in a seed catalogue, or in my travels around the world, I discover a whole new way to experience the foods I already know. Usually, these experiences also lead me to a new person in my life as I pursue my need to understand the traditions and uses for each grain, weed and seed that I use. 30 years ago, I sat with a woman in a stone hut high in the Peruvian Altiplano and chatted about her family and their foods as we washed and soaked quinoa to remove the bitter coating. Her children ran around laughing "gringa, gringa". 10 years ago, one of those children came to stay with us. We still keep in touch.

Food has been my lifelong passion, but it seems like in the past five years I have honed my skills and my creativity with a particularly accurate sharpening stone. There are a number of reasons I can point to for this new refinement. The creative flow is always turned on high when the cortisol (that hormone that controls weight gain) is sluicing through my veins, so in times of stress I cook like there is an army to be fed. When my dad died, I had 500 cookies, five pies, a couple of terrines, a ganache and a galantine to give



Perfect wet loaves of sourdough

Food has shaped and formed me, my creativity and many of my philosophies.

away. The past few years gifted me a lot of opportunities to indulge in this peculiar need to cook. Last summer I used 200 pounds of organic flour trying to perfect my wet loaf sourdough.

Salty tears mixed with the dough in many loaves as I mourned my sister's death. Ironically, great food comes from the joy and love instilled in it. I did not make a great loaf until I started dancing in the kitchen again. Another reason my knowledge has grown is because I teach about food. To transfer my sense of wonder, curiosity and knowledge about food, I must also have fresh insights and information. I become the student again when questions are asked and answers, worked backward from my deep knowledge of both

the scientific and creative side of food. I try to remember what turned me on about a particular dish. Is it the assembly, the ingredients, the plating or the combination of flavours that makes it so interesting? I use food as analogies and metaphors and find myself putting things like parsnips and sweet potatoes in cookies, not just to test my cookie monster's taste buds but to teach that not everything is as it seems. Stretching the boundaries of what *should* be in some things and not in others is also part of my learning and my creativity in the kitchen.

Food has shaped and formed me, my creativity and many of my philosophies. As I have creamed coconut, preserved peaches and kneaded gnocchi, I have been proofed, simmered and baked like a bagel into delicious confidence with a dream for the world to bring all people together at a common table to dine on local foods harvested by people who care about the environment and the earth, talk about things we will do and want to do. At this table, we share our lives, our food, our ideas, then fortified, we go out and create.

"Now come on, let's eat!"

Patricia Guest has been cooking since she was three, and holds precious the lands and the earth that provide the gifts of food for her to prepare. She has been active within the food industry for 25 years as chef, restaurant and resort manager, event planner, advocate for local organic foods, farmer, cooking teacher and writer. She operated a successful market garden and agritourism business, and farmed 14 acres of ground crop at My Country Garden for 10 years. Corn Mazes and giant pumpkins brought 2800 school children a year to the farm, so Patricia taught them what bees do for the farmers and other amazing agricultural facts. The past 10 years found her whipping up astounding breakfasts as she operated Adobe de los Amigos, a bed and breakfast in Peachland that consistently ranked number one on Trip Advisor while she raised her organic child. An active anti-GMO advocate since 1997, Patricia teaches workshops and seminars on clearing toxic bodies and homes, eating sustainably, ethically and other food related topics. She has been teaching cooking and preserving (putting up with Patricia) for eight years using the foods she preserves, picks and sources from farmers she knows. Come fall, you will find her at *Proof, the Club for Creatives* chopping broccoli and inventing a new Okanagan cuisine. adobebb@shaw.ca

ST. BONIFACE AMONG THE VIRGINS

Harold Rhenisch



No one is more important to the northern Camino than Saint Boniface. He was the first to walk the trail into the German forest. The millions who followed after him made his path the main route to the East, and the rest is history.

Boniface lies in a stone sarcophagus in the basement of Fulda Cathedral. Not so fast. The Camino is tricky in the northern forests. Boniface is also easily found downtown, just a few blocks away, on a stone pedestal across a busy arterial street from the palace, and there he's black with soot.

Soot, that's the thing, up on the eastern border of Hessen. Fulda is just a pigeon's spit away from the coal mines where Martin Luther's father used to go down into the ground daily. Down there, he'd see so many demons (along with dwarves, demons live in the rock) that they'd follow him back home. Young Martin, who hadn't yet followed in Boniface's footsteps, had to calm him nightly. Call the demons the subconscious, if you like, but I don't. The forest is tricky. If people weren't grubbing up coal in it, they were burning down trees to coal, which was then shipped down the road to make iron in Frankfurt.

Blame Boniface for that. He was sent to convert the Germans in 717. At the time, the Germans worshipped Odin, the wise traveller who had thrown one of his eyes into the well at the bottom of the world in order to gain wisdom. He got the wisdom, lucky guy, and used ravens as his eyes after that: Thought and Memory were their names. In Hessen, Odin was worshipped at the Donar Oak, and what did Boniface do about that? He chopped it down.

When Odin didn't fell Boniface at the same time, the Germans converted to Boniface's faith. Some of them still hold to it.

For most of German history, though, the trees have kept their spell. Just west of Fulda lies the winding town of Steinau an der Strasse, or *Meadow of Stones on the Road*. It's the prettiest sight: stone houses placed on the corners of a road winding through the pastures. The stones on the road are the houses. They pop up out of the fields like graves, or maybe dice made out of knucklebones and thrown nightly in one of the inns of Steinau.

This is the town that made the Brothers Grimm the Brothers Grimm. You want stories of witches and lost children out in the forest? Welcome to Steinau.

The street winds in Steinau, because ox carts were terrible at making sharp turns but excellent at driving straight off a corner into an inn yard for



St. Boniface came all the way from England to bring Christianity to the Germans. He's interred in the crypt beneath the cathedral around the corner from this square in front of the City Palace in Fulda.



the night, on the long road from Minsk to Paris (or maybe all the way to Santiago). By legal decree, travellers had to stay in Steinau, and only in an inn, and the price was 10% of the value of their load in drink. This 10% became known as Trinkgeld, or Drink Money, and is still the money you give to your waiter at inns in Germany today. It was meant to keep green beer fresh, so if you couldn't drink it all you had to treat everyone in the inn. The father of the Brothers Grimm got to enforce this rule.

The other rule he had to enforce was the closing of the gates. Steinau



was in the middle of nowhere, a long day's travel from the royal seat in the swamps of Gelnhausen or the little nest of Schlüchtern. To keep Steinau safe from the charcoal burners and outlaws of the forest (well, regular Germans, mostly), the gates were locked at dusk and they were not opened for *anything* until dawn. Boniface might have won the towns for Christ, but on the road, panic ruled. This fear was so universal that it had a name: gate-closing panic. No matter *what*, if you threw a wheel on your oxcart or got stuck in the mud, if you didn't make it to Steinau by dusk, bandits had their way with you in the night. Boniface couldn't protect you out there. That's probably because he was killed by bandits himself, which is why he's a saint and his crypt the world's first tourist shrine.

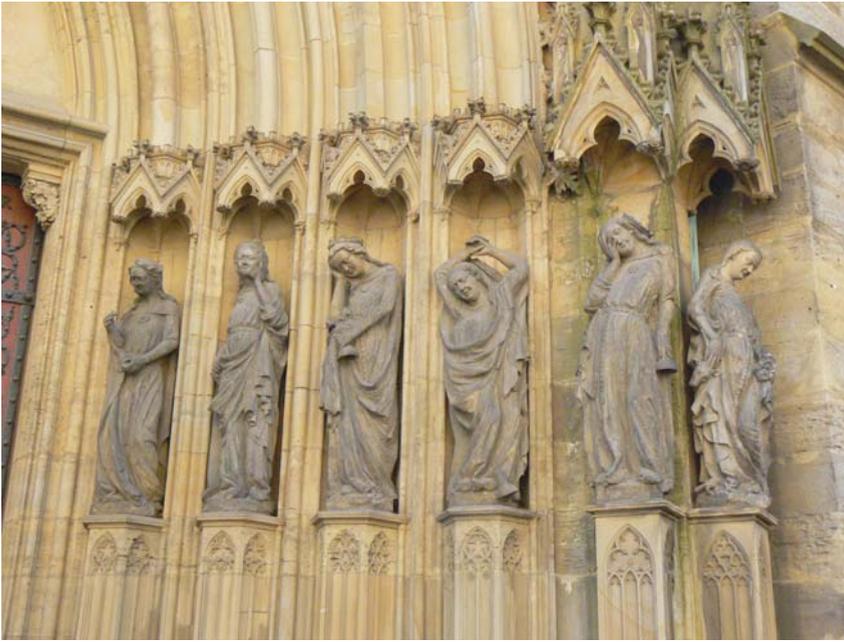
But I don't think Boniface is *actually* in the thing. You see, I went into the cathedral garden. It's like a church graveyard planted with roses, so romantic, but instead of graves, there are bits of stone that have fallen off of the cathedral over time, nicely arranged, complete with dwarves. There are apple trees in bloom in May, so it's kind of like Eden, too, but with dwarves.

In the cathedral treasury, a priest wearing a plain dress shirt, open at the collar, handed me a postcard of the sky above the cathedral. "You need this," he said. It was my entrance ticket. In this unusual financial transaction, no money was involved, and it wasn't a ticket. The bishop's robes were there to see, if seeing was what I wanted, and I did. And then I went back outside, and then I saw.

I saw a tree, a chestnut, behind the cathedral. Beneath it (under video surveillance), was the bishop's black Mercedes, tucked against a red brick

Top: These basement doorways in Steinau show just how crowded things can get when your city is the road, back when there is only one road.

Above: The cathedral garden in Fulda is rich with Christian symbolism, and dwarves like these!



In the Gospel of Matthew, 25: 1-13, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins is presented as Jesus's guides to spiritual life. These are the foolish virgins of the Cathedral of Erfurt. The door beneath them is closed off by a red velvet chair. Too bad.

This former women's entrance was called the door of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The girls were all there: the wise ones who were ready for the bridegrooms, and the foolish ones who missed out because they didn't have oil for their marriage lamps.

wall that looked like Fulda, re-laid here after being loosened up by a bombing raid somewhere around 1944.

Outside the wall, a young woman in red hair, dressed in forest green with knee-high suede leather boots, with a hunting dog on a long lead, caught my eye and held it, and even though she passed, on her way into town, she did not let it go. I had just met Artemis, goddess of the hunt.

That was early in my pilgrimage, before I'd learned to properly name my companions on the road.

Two days later, I was in Gotha, home of the Goths, the English and

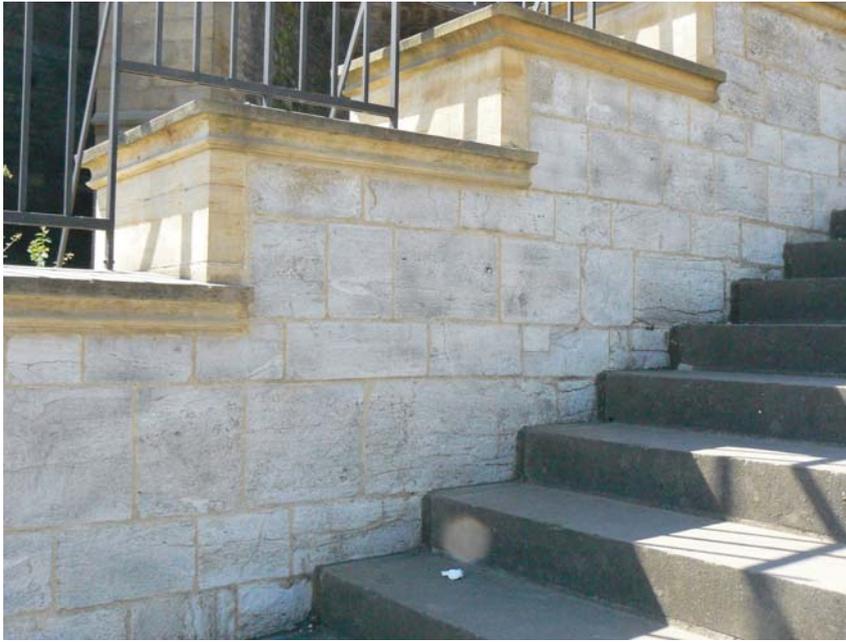
German royal families, and the painter Lucas Cranach the Elder. His house on a corner of the market square is a bit of a wreck these days, but one of his paintings, of a beautiful young woman with red hair, in ringlets, on her marriage day, has an entire room of its own in the palace.

Her name? Well, Artemis, obviously, but also Sibylle of Cleves, before she became the mother of four sons and of several royal families. It's a stunning portrait, that deserves a room of its own, but there's the thing. Nothing on the road stays put.

Two days later, I met her a third time, in the painting that serves as an altar in Boniface's cathedral in Erfurt (he had four): The Engagement of St. Katharina. She's sitting beside Maria and her little son Jesus, holding his infant hand with a look of teenage eeyew. I know that's not a word, but that's the look. It's a stunning portrait, too, but imagine my shock when I saw her there.

I had just been outside, snooping. I'd found a closed-off door to the cathedral. This former women's entrance was called the door of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. The girls were all there: the wise ones who were ready for the bridegrooms, and the foolish ones who missed out because they didn't have oil for their marriage lamps. The wise virgins wouldn't share their oil with the partying foolish virgins, either. The poor girls had to traipse off to the oil shop. Alas, the bridegrooms came when the foolish virgins were buying their oil, and left (with the wise virgins) before foolish ones came back. That was the women's entrance once. The men entered where everyone enters now, under the glare of the saint, which is half as much fun. My heart was with the foolish girls. They were beautiful.

Those old masters were clever. They gave the church the images it wanted, and put within them the images of freedom that the church definitely *did not* want. The church enjoyed the joke as much as everyone. It also left the images above the door, and left the altar of one of Christianity's



These are the new bricks along the stairway leading up to the cathedral of Erfurt. Shoddy work, for sure, but I witnessed the workmen completely outwit a priest's attempts to exact compensation.

major cathedrals as a painting of three women (not the usual men) grouped around one baby with its arms out held like a cross. Now, if Katharina would just lift that little chubby arm a bit more, the cross would be perfect, but... eeyew.

The priest was outside. He was wearing the uniform, it seems, of German priests, a plain dress shirt and navy blue slacks, and was losing an argument with a couple of bricklayers. I munched on an apple and watched the show. The priest was arguing that the new steps weren't right. I had to agree. It was mighty sloppy work.

Only twenty years before, this had been the Republic of Farmers and Workers. These bricklayers were old enough to have done their apprenticeship in it. "Here are the cracks," said the priest. "Look, the grout is working loose." The workers scratched their heads, nodded in commiseration, and shrugged. The priest lost this argument. The bricklayers were as immovable as rock.

Harold Rhenisch has been writing poems and histories of the Okanagan for over thirty-five years. His work is based on a wide range of models from literature to ancient prayer, myth, and spell-craft. He is currently exploring the deep roots of the language in Old Norse and Anglo Saxon. After twenty years in the Cariboo and on Vancouver Island, and after two long journeys on the German section of the Camino, he has returned home. Harold lives in Vernon, where he writes the deep ecology blog, www.okanaganokanogan.com, and is the webmaster for Gallery Vertigo, in Vernon. www.galleryvertigo.net

FINAL MEMORIES OF AN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE



Carolyn Cowan

The day before I was to fly to Calgary for my dear 65 year-old brother-in-law's funeral, my mother's care home, also in Calgary, phoned to say that she had become unresponsive that morning. I changed my booking, flew to Calgary, and to her nursing home to stay overnight. We had one funeral to get through, hopefully, first. Mom held on. She passed away very peacefully, despite a case of shingles, on the Sunday evening, short of her 92nd birthday.

That said, I only want to write of a few happy events with my mother as her Alzheimer's grew progressively worse, over the past fifteen years, and in particular, the last five years.

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Each year, I'd visit family in Calgary and spend as much time as I could with our mother. I'd push her wheelchair outside into the sunshine and sing the old hymns she loved. One of her favourite hymns was "He Walks with Me". I'd swing her arms back and forth to the rhythm of the song. I could only remember the words of the chorus, so I would improvise or hum the verses. One day, she began to sing with me, and remembered many of the chorus words, then used her own unique vocabulary for the rest. It only happened once, but it left me surprised and with a wonderful memory and a story of the power of music and Alzheimer's. While she sang, she stared at me with a look of concentration, as though she were trying to recall long forgotten words.

SHE WHO LAUGHS FIRST AND LAST

My mother always had an infectious, self-deprecating sense of humour. It was one of her greatest and endearing gifts. To see the absurdity in oneself is a masterful way to retain sanity. Up to that time, I had often thought to myself that mom's life with advanced Alzheimer's was no life at all. It was painful and heartbreaking to watch her seemingly unconscious presence that could continue for days. If she knew the personal and necessary indignities she was exposed to daily, I thought, she'd hate what had become of her life.

Then, one time while visiting, I sat beside her, arm around her shoulder, and talked to her. I talked to her quite a lot. My thinking was that if she was going to drive me crazy with her gibberish when she talked, the least I could do was return the favour. She had her head down on her chest. By that point,

That is, both women were talking simultaneously to the other in a language perhaps both, or neither could understand. It was an absurd moment, but touching to watch it play out in the world of Alzheimer's.



This is my favourite photograph of my mother. We often assume to know what goes on in another's mind. It's highly unlikely. Nevertheless, here, I think mom's look is saying, "Fine, take the picture, but don't expect me to move from this bench anytime soon." Photo by Maxine Cowan

Carolyn Cowan is an editor of this journal, writer, aspiring poet, and artist. She likes to be amused, and failing that, to amuse herself, given any opportunity. She is eternally grateful that she moved to Kelowna from Toronto, Ontario, before this past winter unfurled its wrath there. Carolyn can be contacted at cacowan@telus.net. She would be delighted to hear your comments regarding the Journal, or anything else you want to write about.

it seemed to be the normal position for her; she had no support muscles left in her neck. (As an aside, after that visit, we arranged for an adjustable wheelchair that allowed for neck support.) Suddenly, her shoulders began shaking. It looked as though she was crying. I was perplexed and upset. What had I said? I bent down in front of her to look up at her face. She was laughing so hard that she her upper body was shaking. Even after 15 years of Alzheimer's, mother had maintained her sense of humour. Somewhere inside, she still found something in her daily existence amusing, and was aware enough to realize its absurdity. Later, I recall thinking that I had been wrong, and feeling a relief, and release from guilt. If mom could find humour in her internal reality, her life was worth living.

TWO CAN TALK AT ONCE AND NOT BE RUDE

Last June, I walked into the central room, to visit mom. I walked around the chairs, and wheelchairs, there among a sea of white hair. Wheelchairs were set almost on top of each other at the main table. Mother was at one end with her back to me, turned toward another woman in her wheelchair. Mom was animated, speaking quickly and non-stop. I looked at the woman seated and turned toward my mother. This woman was, also, speaking and gesturing rapidly. That is, both women were talking simultaneously to the other in a language perhaps both, or neither could understand. It was an absurd moment, but touching to watch it play out in the world of Alzheimer's.

MEAL TIMES

Many of my favourite experiences with mom were during meal times. It was, also, convenient for staff at the centre with so many people requiring help with their meal. Mom had a sweet disposition, so feeding her was a pleasure, not a struggle. She, also, had a healthy appetite given her small frame. One evening, the low Calgary winter sun was streaming through the window. Mom had beautiful baby blue eyes, especially noticeable when struck by the sunlight. She was turned toward me as I scooped a pureed meal of different, separate vegetables, and meat onto a spoon and lifted it toward her mouth. She would keep her blue eyes on me the whole time with her mouth opening wide to close around the spoonful of food. This slow ritual would continue for 45 minutes, with stops for long swallows of juice and milk.

I feel disrespectful, which I intend in no possible way, to compare feeding my mother with that of a baby. Her gaze on me of complete innocence and trust as I fed her made me sad. It filled me, more importantly though, with a deep love for this woman who had given birth to me, lived 91 years, navigated through all that life had parcelled out to her, only in the end to return to that state where she, herself, began.

ALL ALONE AND HAVING FUN

Karen Close



Below: Daphne through the window

Bottom: Making art gives my grandchildren the same complete engagement

For the past year, I have visited esteemed 94 year-old Canadian painter Daphne Odjig at the Cottonwoods Care Facility in Kelowna. Daphne learned her love of art from her grandfather, Jonas. “I was his shadow, watching,” she remembers. From her, I have come to better understand eldering, and why creativity is indeed a life skill I want for my grandchildren.

Daphne has a new room since I last wrote about her in this Journal. (Fall, 2013). She now has a window that looks out at the Cottonwoods’ entrance. As I arrive, I choose to look in, to let her know I’m coming. The glimpse is almost always the same, and it feeds my determination for what can be when we embrace creativity into our lives.

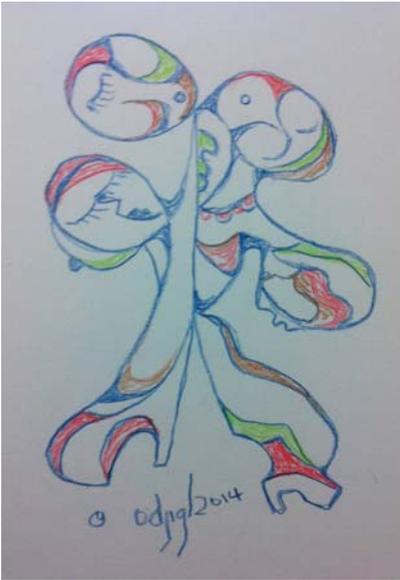
Earlier this year, I spent a month with my grandchildren. I am delighted by their intensity when they create, and intoxicated by the smiles I receive when they look up at me, beaming from within. Daphne also smiles like that when she looks up from drawing. Untethered and roaming in her own imagination, she is finding completion. What a privilege to grow old still engaged with the heART of one’s being. That’s an opportunity each of us deserves.

For a couple of years before Daphne arrived at Cottonwoods, she had given up her creative practice, sure that the arthritis in her hands was too great an obstacle. Cottonwoods’ recreation therapist Carol White knows how creative expression can encourage residents to engage meaningfully. With compassion and minimal supplies, Carol has built a painting program. Knowing Daphne’s reputation, Carol was determined to reunite this artist with her voice. Daphne was hesitant, but then not. This past February she took the coloured pencils and sketchbook Carol offered and began to draw. When I returned from a six week vacation Daphne was eager to show me her new drawings. I could feel the same enthusiasm from her that I’d felt during my time away with my grandchildren. As Daphne showed me those first drawings she announced, “I couldn’t stand it any longer. My soul had to speak.”

Three months later she has finished her fourth, forty page sketchbook. “What do the others do with all this time?” she asks. I share her concern. Of course Daphne has a lifetime of experience to rely on, but she and I both know it’s more about giving oneself permission to play, observe, and engage. “I just start with a mark and then let my imagination wander with the pencil.” Daphne explains. “Anyone can do it if they let themselves.”

Creative spirit is the friend that is always there, waiting, but the union needs to be nurtured. It’s a question of personal responsibility. Like my





Top: Daphne's first drawing at Cottonwoods

Middle: Daphne planned this image and directs Carol with a watchful eye.

Bottom: Self Portrait?

grandchildren, each of us is born eager to play creatively - until we are taught to question and doubt our imaginations, and "Please, don't make a mess." Daphne benefited from a unique education and the wisdom of a grandfather who instilled his passion for creating. Because of illness, she was taken out of the school system at the age of thirteen. Self-directed, and with a keen mind, she was encouraged to observe and let her internal voice guide her life journey. "I have never planned a painting - even my big murals. I just start out and see where the drawing or painting will take me. When something goes wrong, I work with what's there until I see a new way. My best work comes from things that at first seemed mistakes. I love mistakes." This process of reacting, not directing, continues to delight Daphne. Pencil is a very precise medium and she struggles with grip and the hesitancy her weakness can give a line, but she remains buoyant and determined. "I'm always so anxious to get back at it." The experience of all she has known drives her hand, urging her to continue to create who she still is and what she wants to say. I love the strong portraits that have emerged in her most recent drawings.

The beauty of Daphne's work lies in its uniqueness, and what it invites us to consider. Although earlier works have been steeped in native myth, now her pencil moves with pure instinct. What she creates both surprises and satisfies her. On my first visit a year ago, as we began to talk, Daphne proclaimed, "My works are me. I have nothing more to say." Today she doesn't want to explain her works or really even talk about them. She's made that very clear to me. "The works say it," and she declines other speculations. Over 94 years, she has developed a unique style and an ability to express herself through the elements of line, shape, colour, and an internal sense of balance, order, and design. Aristotle taught that a sense of aesthetic balance is essential to health and wellness.

Daphne has a full grasp of the language of art and is confident that it is her most truthful expression. She knows her heart and finds its voice in art. I see this instinctive understanding pulse within my grandchildren as they paint or when they sing or dance. Why did we devise an education system that would discourage the heart's purity in favour of the mind's rationality and judgement, even in the arts? I deeply regret how many have been stifled by our culture's misunderstanding of the arts. I hope we're becoming more aware of what creative abuse can do to the human spirit

Many have asked me why this woman, a national icon, firm of mind and spirit, is in this facility. She is wheelchair bound, which makes physical self-care limited. She wears a hearing aid, but I find her astute in conversation. The idealist in me responds, "When we live creatively, we move beyond physical limitations. We realise that the physical is temporary. The spiritual transcends." Daphne says: "You learn to just accept." As she changed the respect our culture gave to Native Art, she is going to change the respect we give to our own creative spirits. She will be truly alive until the day she leaves us. That is the power of creative expression. Each day, alone with her being, Daphne draws images of her spirit, her soul. She is advancing her personal



Top: Life Is Full

Above: Daphne loves her purple streak

legacy as she models healthy aging. Medical research is beginning to study the health benefits of creativity. Daphne is reinforcing their discoveries.

Most importantly, not only is creativity healthy, it's fun. A mindless, but observant creative conversation with a pencil can bring insight, peace, and often humour. My grandchildren know that. They love explaining what they see in their marks made with free abandon. *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* is a choice. It's about nurturing the voice within, and hearing what our souls have to say, as Daphne does.

My visits with Daphne will continue, but as I conclude this article, today's visit (It was Mother's Day) is sharp in my mind. I had been away for ten days. I paused to look through the window as I approached. I felt apprehension, but there was Daphne lying in bed drawing; all was good. I approached her bed and felt the beam of her smile. and then I gasped, "Look at the purple in your hair." "Yes," she responded. "A woman, an artist, came by to visit with her 97 year-old mother. The woman said she thought we should celebrate the day with something daring and she painted our hair. I let her. What do you think?"

"I love it. You look like a teenager." As she broke into a broad smile, I felt her deep resource of life energy. Curiosity and daring continue to sustain her. Never doubting her creativity or fearing how others might judge, she expressed her true self and garnered admiration. Creatively expressing who you are, allows a comfort zone in which to grow old.

Growing old is not a choice. Unfortunately, our final environment is often not a choice either, but how we respond is. We are born knowing *transcendence* and joy, but many forget or are discouraged. As explained by Joan Erikson in *The Life Cycle Completed*, "*Transcendence* calls forth the language of the arts; nothing else speaks so deeply and meaningfully to our hearts and souls. The great dance of life can transport us into all realms of making and doing with every item of body, mind and spirit involved." Daphne adds, "I wish everyone could feel the passion I feel. I love that my little hands made all those paintings." She is an elder, modeling how I want to complete my life, and why I will nurture creative spirit in my grandchildren.

Karen Close is an editor of *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*. She is a retired English and Visual Arts teacher and strong advocate for arts and health. She founded the Journal firm in the belief that we need to share the wisdom brought to each of us through creative engagement with life's moments. Karen has been on the advisory council of The Arts Health Network <http://artshealthnetwork.ca/> since its inception 10 years ago. She can be contacted at karensageing@gmail.com

WORDS FROM THE HEART

POETRY

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

Mary Ann Moore

When people ask me how long it took to write *Fishing for Mermaids*, my first full-length book of poetry, I tell them a few of the poems in the collection go back to the late nineties. That means it took me over fifteen years to write!

Chapbooks were published in the meantime but all along I had a vision of my first collection. Many poems were set aside to make room for all the new poems written since I moved to Vancouver Island from Ontario in 2005.

Since moving here, I've been inspired by the wildness of the place and its history. I've had the privilege of attending poetry retreats with master poet and teacher Patrick Lane to learn more about my craft. Becoming part of a vibrant community of poets has also been a boon to my writing and my life.

Every word counts in a poem and my editor and publisher at Leaf Press, Ursula Vaira, is meticulous and gentle with a poet's words. When reading the poems in *Fishing for Mermaids*, people will learn something about me. Most important, I expect, they will learn something about themselves.

Two poems from *Fishing for Mermaids*, Leaf Press, 2014

MAKING ROOM

Mary Ann Moore

Open to the irritation,
grit forms a pearl
it's been said
fish for mermaids, dive for pearls
the end is the beginning –

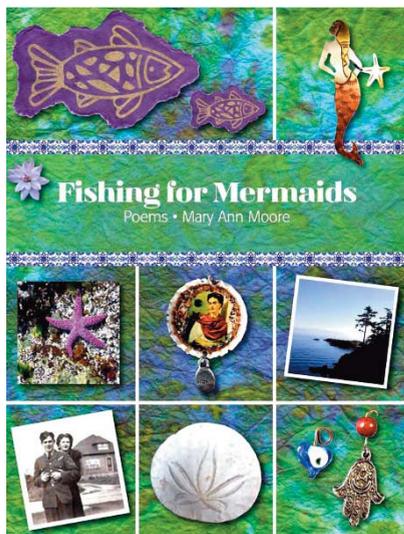
Down at the bottom
a mouldy smelling trunk
black and white photographs
with lipstick smears,
a wedding gown,
a Bible with passages marked.

Place them on the sunlit sill
until the memories infuse the trees.
Those elders with their waving arms
know what to keep,
what to surrender to the wind.

You stand mesmerized
by dust particles
in a river of light.



Photo By Lance Sullivan



SURE-AS-MORNING

Mary Ann Moore

Needing one, I invented you –
a flying nature guide called Sure-as-
Morning
to lift me above the day-to-day, the day-to-
do
to the place where the winged creatures
glide on gusts of wind
and teach me how easy it is to let go.

Above the Douglas firs I have a-big-picture
view
of great herons rising, eagles ever-attentive
to what creeps and hops below,
snow-crowned mountains in the distance,
a churning, tourmaline sea below.

Sure-as-Morning, you guide me towards
the shore,
moss-covered rocks, the forest lit up with
rusty bark,
berries the colour of cadmium on the
arbutus tree,
holly leaves a glistening green, wild carrot
offering a lacy edge.

Rebel logs hover above the orcas, sea lions
and otters.
Purple starfish and jellyfish undulate
through the water
too slippery to be caught and tamed.
A vital force lives below that surface and
Sure-as-Morning
you encourage me to dive.

Pointing my body like an arrow towards the
waves,
I forget about breathing and the penetrat-
ing cold,
plunge into the watery depths,
open my eyes wide, in the liquid womb of
Gaia.

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www.apoetsnanaimo.ca

WHO LISTENS TO THE LISTENER?

Carolyn Cowan

She sits heavy at the table
eyes hooded and dark.
Her young daughter paints beside her
oblivious to the numbness
behind her mother's eyes.
A widow but three hours.

A nurse approaches.
"I was with your husband when
he passed away.
I want you to know
he did not suffer in the end."

The widow responds to thank her.
The nurse continues with
words that flow into communal space.
The widow listens.

Even the commonplace listener
has expectations.
One listens to another in an unspoken
agreement of reciprocity.

The wise differ. They listen. They hear.
Stories wash over and through them
without expectation to commentary.

Later, and later still, the
fragile widow tries to break the flow.
To speak of the unfolding darkness.
But her time has passed.
As though, even in these sacred moments,
roles can be defined and rigidly assigned.

She's reaches over to
caress her daughter's head;
to comfort herself.

The young widow looks up at the nurse
and silently wonders,
Where are you?

REMEMBER THE MUSIC?

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

For my sister Joan

Memory casts her silvery net
over meadows crisscrossed by waterways,
skies thatched with wings of windmills,
every horizon abrupt with spires,
cradle of our dim but growing awareness

when the weather cock cried us awake
to short winter days crammed into desks,
walking home in the near dark bundled
up in heavy coats and sensible shoes

summers when we bravely built
castles and moats on the beach though
the sun broke through but rarely
and cardigans covered our bathing suits

One endless day we boarded a ship
and sailed away with only an echo
of what we had known, an orchestra
suddenly silenced.

Much later, on this foreign soil
memory refocused
and what was lost
was found to be the music
that had never stopped
playing.

SONGWRITERS STEWUDIO



Sandy McAfee

The importance of creative expression to personal well-being is very familiar to me. If I had truly understood the magnitude of its importance, I would not have waited so long to make it a priority. I waded through life feeling like I was doing everything I was supposed to do, but was somehow failing. I had been diagnosed with chronic clinical depression in my early 40's and was sentenced to a life of permanent medication. I felt unfulfilled, frustrated, and that there must be more to life. I chose another way and discovered that there was.

The exploration brought new experiences and now, almost 15 years later, life looks very different. Today, I am a performing singer/songwriter, I host open mics and have the most amazing partners in a project called Songwriters Stewdio (and yes, it is spelled that way, for reasons that will soon become clear).

My personal musical journey began about nine years ago and has taken me into worlds I had not even dreamed of: recording my own music, a CD release concert inside the pyramid at Summerhill Winery and four months traveling solo across Canada. Inspired by the amazing musicians I met on that journey, the vision for an outlet for songwriters began. The best was yet to come.

In a perfect unfolding, Lynda Norman, the Executive Director of The Association of Artists for Creative Alliance (ACA), and I connected. She is an amazing woman with a vision for our community and the arts. She has created a non-profit organization whose Mission Statement is "To Inspire Creativity" and her vision is to become a hub where programs can be created and delivered. Artists can perform, exhibit and share their work for everyone to appreciate, and have the opportunity to interact with one another.

Their initial project was OUR Coffeehouse which offers an open mic performance opportunity that now runs twice a month in Reid Hall at the heritage site of Benvoulin Church, in Kelowna. On the second to last and the last Wednesday of each month, musicians, poets, and storytellers take the stage. The acoustics and ambiance of this listening environment provide an opportunity to hear some really great performers. Artists are given a space to practice their performing skills. The evening ends with a feature performer handpicked from the wide variety of talent found in the Okanagan.

Lynda had recently worked with Mike Pedersen, the owner and operator of Music City Studio. Mike is a young entrepreneur who built his studio in 2011 with a vision to provide opportunities for local artists to grow and fulfill their personal and professional goals. The space is an inspiring place to





The team

Songwriters Stewdio is a magical musical stew created by gathering local songwriters, musicians and music lovers in a real recording studio for evenings of collaboration and connection.

rehearse, to learn more about the art of recording, and it provides professional recording services. In a very short time, Mike has established his studio as an integral part of the growing music scene in Kelowna. He has worked with a number of great local artists: *My Kind of Karma*, who have recently been booked to open for *Blue Rodeo*; *Gorden James*, featured on CMT's *Big in a Small Town*; and *Honest Woods*, who placed in the regional finals of the CBC Searchlight Competition, to name only a few.

It took one meeting over coffee for Lynda to sense the essence of possibility. She brought the three of us together for a brainstorming session and the perfect alignment of our visions was a recipe for something magical, this combined vision melted into a pot and the "stew" began to simmer.

THE INGREDIENTS

1 Songwriter

2 Songs presented

1 Song chosen by vote

Multiple musicians, vocalists and a variety of instruments

Limited time to simmer in the song (approximately 45 minutes)

And on cue... *record* what we have created

Stir and repeat

The recipe for Songwriters Stewdio was developed, and several weeks later, in August 2013, we served up the first session to test out the concept. The feeling and results exceeded our expectation.

So what exactly is it? Songwriters Stewdio is a magical musical stew created by gathering local songwriters, musicians and music lovers in a real recording studio for evenings of collaboration and connection. The flavour of a *stew* changes depending on the ingredients and the same can be said for this unique musical jam session. It varies, is unpredictable, and brings out musicians of multiple generations, genres and levels of musical accomplishment. To date, the ages of our participants range from 13 to 70. Individuals who only play in their basement can end up sitting beside full-time professional musicians with everyone working together, speaking the common language of music. Through this jamming process, we create an enhanced version of the original songs presented.

Songwriters Stewdio is a gateway of potentiality for the music scene; the sessions create a space to network and collaborate in a fresh and unique way. The supportive listening environment is a rare opportunity for writers to present their original works. Surrounded by peers, they feel heard, they have a voice.

Although the project is less than a year old, it has already captured the attention of local media: Global TV, Okanagan Life Magazine, Event Magazine, Kelowna Now (Welcome to Kelowna) and What's On (Castanet). Local songwriters attending open mics hear about the project and contact The Stewdio on a regular basis. Each event has brought out new participants and has already created a loyal following. Guests have included touring artists, local radio personalities and even guests from the Access to Music Foundation.

The objective is not to critique the work but to honour what the songwriter has created, exactly as is. We work with the framework pre-



Sessions at the Songwriters Stewdio

Sandy McAfee is a mix of artist, business woman and inspiration. She has walked many paths in this life and earned a Degree from Life University. Her journey as a single mom, working in the corporate world in multiple industries, and operating her own business laid a foundation that she pulls from frequently. A search for purpose and fulfillment carried her to the creative life she lives now.

As a singer and songwriter, Sandy's voice has been described as a *jacuzzi for your ears* and it delivers her poetic originals gently to the soul. Her style is reflective of a simpler time, when music was raw and organic.

Sandy has found freedom and passion, and a new love in encouraging other artists to walk through the fears that often come with creative expression.

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sented, utilize the ingredients on hand in a short timeframe and see what happens. The results are perfectly imperfect and organic. At the beginning, when we first start jamming on the song, it sounds somewhat chaotic and even disjointed. After a few more run-throughs, the song begins to take shape. You can actually feel it click into place; it begins to take on a life of its own. As the clock ticks down, we cue the group that it is time to lay down the track and voila, it is done.

It is wonderful to hear the results after Mike Pedersen takes the raw recording and mixes it. Anyone who has been in a studio is aware that this raw way of recording is not how it is done anymore; some might question our methodology and decision to release something that is not perfectly arranged and professionally recorded. We get it. We are willing to sacrifice perfection to be spontaneous and capture the magic that happens when people come together to create. And when we see the smiles in the room and the cheer that inevitably flows from someone's lips upon completion of the recording, we know it is worth the sacrifice.

The online recordings are reaching a wide audience with over 5,000 plays! They are being shared between artists and fans, creating increased awareness of the talent that resides in our community. Artists receive a voice for their original work and the opportunity of expressing it in a new way. The support these artists are receiving increases their exposure, builds their confidence and provides opportunity for growth. In December, the digital releases were grouped into a digital-only album and sold to raise money for the local food bank. To listen to the recordings currently online go to www.soundcloud.com and search for Songwriters Stewdio.

Guests with an interest in watching this creative process also attend the sessions. They've reported that they loved the experience and have come away feeling excited and inspired. This project is strengthening our musical community. Individuals who never would have met or played together are building friendships and collaborative projects.

So how do you measure the well-being received through creative outlets? I know there are studies out there and lots of statistical information that could be located and quoted. In the Stewdio, we don't need statistics to tell us the impact of gathering in community to create music out of something we have never heard before. We feel it for hours after every session and for days after that; we hear it in the sounds filling the room and in our heads when we can't stop singing that tune from last week; we see it in the smiles that beam from everyone gathered in the room as we play together and share wine and snacks as we get to know one another. We know Songwriters Stewdio's value at a deep level and wish the same opportunity for every person on this planet. We wish for you to find that creative outlet that inspires you, that juice of life that leaves you feeling vibrant and alive.

STAGING MY THIRD ACT



Janet Anderson

One of my earliest memories of school is from kindergarten, preparing for the Christmas concert. The teacher was talking about the carol we were going to learn and I offered to sing a solo if she needed someone to. I didn't suggest this out of ego or a desire to be specially noticed – I had barely turned five years old. I just had an inherent love of creative expression and the desire to share it.

“There are voices which we hear in solitude but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter the world.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

I later went to theatre school determined to be an actor, or at least to work in the theatre profession. I studied acting and also stage management so I would have something to fall back on if I didn't 'make it' as an actor. By then, I had felt the sting of rejection, and the embarrassment of a bad performance, but the draw, the need to be around creativity was strong. I had several interesting and vital jobs supporting artists. I was fortunate to work with some of the most innovative actors, directors, designers, dancers, musicians, writers and technicians in Canada. Like many women, however, my life revolved around nurturing everyone but myself. I was married to a brilliantly creative man and had a daughter and son who are both gifted artists.

I have now been acting in the Okanagan for a few years, and have appeared in several plays and a few movies. How did this suddenly happen? My children grew up and some friends, colleagues and loved ones began to pass away. Although my elderly parents relied on me, I could see my own physical and emotional health was not good, and I was seriously burned out. One day, while at yet another job supporting artists, it really hit me - now or never. I was getting closer to my *3rd Act*; I was in the phase of life that was supposed to be the most productive and the happiest. That day, I signed up to take an improvisation class at the Kelowna Actors Studio, and haven't looked back. I was frightened, but more afraid of my life ending before becoming the person I was meant to be.

“And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” Anaïs Nin

I have been fortunate to be cast in some wonderful roles over the last four years. The wacky and damaged Theresa in *Sins of the Mothers*, the religious pessimist Margaret in *Waiting for the Parade*, the fearless pragmatist Eunice in

I signed up to take an improvisation class at the Kelowna Actors Studio, and haven't looked back.



Top: Cast of *Sins of the Mothers*

Middle: Becky and Steve

Bottom: Marie in *Calendar Girls*

A Streetcar Named Desire, and the crazy psychologist Mrs. Sawyer in *Miracle on 34th Street* were all roles that set the foundation for three plays I would like to focus on here.

The most significant moment in my recent creative development was when I decided to audition for the part of Becky in *Becky's New Car*, a contemporary *dramedy* produced by Powerhouse Theatre. When I first read the script, I knew without a doubt that I had to play Becky. That was the first time I had ever felt such surety about a role; that I was the one who should play her. This was a huge step for me – I actually had some confidence in my artistic talents! I knew who Becky was – I understood and empathized with her. I knew I needed to bring her to life.

Becky's New Car is the story of a woman who has been married for 28 years to a roofer, and has a grown son living in the basement. Becky works at an auto dealership with not many prospects for change or excitement. An unplanned meeting with a rich, older widower and a few unconventional choices send Becky off on a mid-life journey that profoundly affects not only her, but also those she cares for. Along the way, she laughs, cries, appeases, compromises, defends, feels guilty, is confused, tells lies, cheats on her husband, and finally comes full circle with new knowledge and a few deep scars. Most significantly, the courage to finally demand more from life changes her, and as painful as it is, unlocks the path to self-discovery that we all deserve to take.

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. To keep our faces towards change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable.” Helen Keller

I love the process of preparing for a role, and read the script a few times before I begin my research. Everything an actor needs to know about a character should be in the script, but an important component for me is learning about the place, time, circumstances and atmosphere of the story. I research where the play takes place, the clothing, hairstyles, makeup, and also how the women fit into their society and how they respond to that position. I look at art, architecture, books, cultural influences, technology, significant people and events - anything that will help me understand the story and its characters. Becky Foster was my easiest character to research because she is an American Caucasian woman living in modern society. Becky's life was one I could easily relate to. What middle-aged woman hasn't thought about her life's path and wondered where a different road would have led?

Calendar Girls is the true story of how in 1998 a group of middle-aged British women from the Women's Institute raised funds to buy a new couch for the family waiting room in a cancer ward in a Yorkshire hospital. One of their husbands was suffering from the disease and they decided to do a nude calendar to raise money – the first such calendar of its kind. The fundraising was so successful that an entire new hospital wing was built, and their efforts



Rebecca

Janet Anderson has extensive experience as a coordinator, producer, director and actor in the development and implementation of arts and culture programs and productions. She has been fortunate to work with several innovative arts organizations across Canada including The Stratford Festival, The Banff World Television Festival and The Banff Centre for the Arts. Janet is grateful to have worked with several Okanagan theatre companies including the Kelowna Actors Studio, Theatre Kelowna, Playhouse 25, New Vintage Theatre, and Powerhouse Theatre. Currently she is preparing for her role as Yente the Matchmaker in *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Kelowna Actors Studio.

spawned a charitable organization that is still active and successful today. The story focuses on the women's relationships, the obstacles they faced, the fears they had about exposing their bodies, and both the positive and negative fallout from their success. Researching Marie from *Calendar Girls* was a lot of fun that was aided by the fact that it is a true story. The Women's Institute has existed for a century and has an extensive website. A popular film was made on the story. I loved playing Marie. She was fiercely loyal to tradition and her Queen, but was shunned by the other women for sticking to her (somewhat misguided) beliefs.

Rebecca is a play adapted from the novel by Daphne du Maurier. Alfred Hitchcock directed the Oscar winning movie in 1944. It is a fabulous thriller about a poor, young woman who marries a wealthy British estate owner whose wife had died a year earlier. The young woman is thrust into a world she has no experience in, and is challenged daily by the stern housekeeper of the estate, Mrs. Danvers. Their relationship to each other and to the deceased Rebecca, along with some dark family secrets, is the focus of this tense and frightening story. Mrs. Danvers was a challenging character for me. I was fortunate to have a hefty novel to read which was excellent for understanding the entire tale, along with the film version. The relationships in the play are complex and emotional, with a myriad of layers. Mrs. Danvers goes to some dark places and commits evil acts. Learning to embrace such a character was interesting and enlightening.

Just like all of us, the women I have played justify their behavior and actions, and think they are doing the right thing. I try to tell their stories through their eyes and to safeguard who they are. It is an honour to be the one trusted to do so. I see aspects of myself in every character I portray, as we are all driven by the same needs and desires. All the women I play are real to me, with genuine relationships and life struggles, strengths and weaknesses; each is flawed and beautiful. This for me is the essence of acting and why I am so drawn to it. Examining the human condition and my own life through the creation of a living entity is an amazing experience. Without exception the characters come from within me and often the process leads to surprising discoveries about my own beliefs and attitudes.

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“When a woman falls in love with the magnificent possibilities within herself, the forces that would limit those possibilities hold less and less sway over her.” Marianne Williamson

WHY DO I PAINT?

Julie Elliot



Recently, someone asked me, “How much time do you spend every day on your art?” It’s a simple question that’s not easy to answer. I could say I paint for three hours a day and that would be true. I could also say I work for five hours a day, if I include my morning practice of journaling, reading and meditating before I paint. Then again, I could say 16 hours a day because I’m thinking, observing, listening and making connections all day long, not just when I’m in my studio. Finally, I could say 24 hours a day because my unconscious mind continues to *work on me* while I’m sleeping. So I guess the answer is that I spend all day and every day on my art! But what’s happening really? How does painting inform my daily life, and indeed daily life inform my painting? Or to put another way, why do I paint?

One answer is that painting is a visual language and so when I’m engaged in my studio the visual world is enlivened and awakened for me. For example, if I’ve been painting all morning and using triangular shapes, later I’ll go for a walk and suddenly the spaces in silhouetted branches leap out as triangles. Or, I find myself studying the spaces between objects on a table, and as I glance at a unique grey stone I think, Umber and white with a touch of cobalt blue. I study the patterns of dripping water as I squeegee the glass shower doors in the morning. Melting butter on a black frying pan is mesmerizing. Colours, lines, shapes, textures, contrast – it’s a visual language that’s always there, and yet it’s always new when I’m painting regularly.

I also paint because it helps me to live from all my intelligence centres. Cynthia Bourgeault (modern day mystic, Episcopal priest and writer) calls this Three-Centered Knowing. In her book *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*, Bourgeault says, “Wisdom is a way of knowing that goes beyond one’s mind, one’s rational understanding, and embraces the whole of a person: mind,

heart and body.” I strive to paint with this kind of wholeness. It involves trusting knowledge that I know is true though I have no words for it. It’s about understanding the power of metaphor and symbol. It’s also trusting my intuition and paying attention to serendipity. When I’m aligned in Three-Centered Knowing, there is no sense of time and I know exactly what I’m doing while I know nothing about where the painting is going. It’s a state of being that we knew as children and one that we can return to when we’re creative.

I often work with young children and am constantly reminded how they respond to the simplest art experiences – a paintbrush and paint is awe-inspiring

Unexpected Possibilities





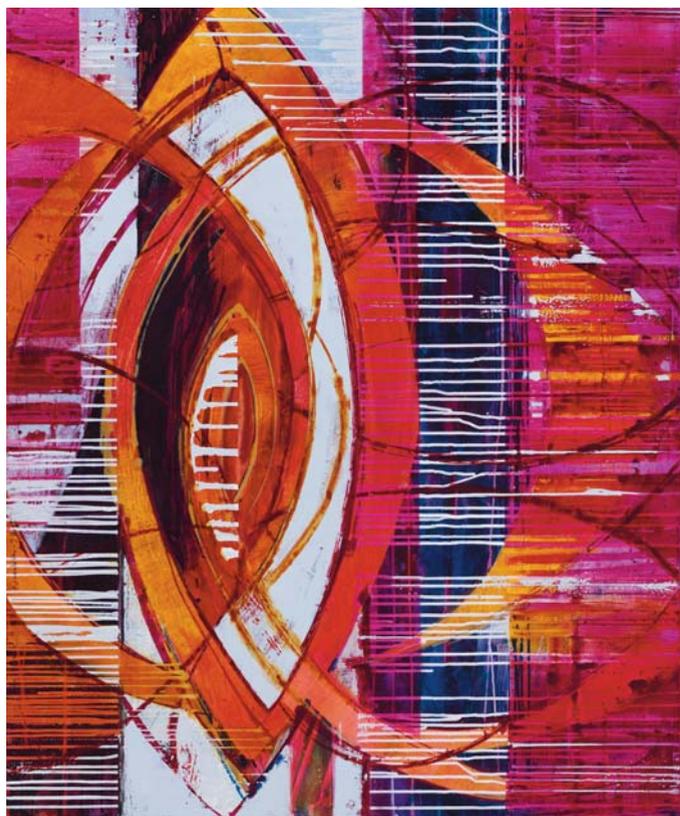
Left: Fusion
Right: Oneness



I want to create paintings that are meaningful for me, and at the same time open to interpretation for the viewer. So, my process isn't about illustrating something. It's more about letting something emerge that I didn't expect.

for a two-year old. They're completely focused on what's before them. They love what they're doing. They're present and living fully in the moment and they don't have a thought of whether it's good or bad or whether they're an artist or not. To enter into this way of being I've developed a process that starts by flooding a canvas with colours and seeing how they mix and pool together as they dry. Sometimes, I set objects into the wet paint to create silhouettes. I'm aware of the five universal shapes: circle, square, triangle, spiral and cross as I move the paint around. Later, when the paint is dry, I turn the canvas in four directions and sit back to see what it wants next. It's like a conversation where the painting has its own voice. American writer, Madeleine L'Engle says, "Inspiration far more often comes during the work than before it, because the largest part of the job of the artist is to listen to the work, and go where it tells one to go." So, if the painting is quiet I try to let it be. I try not to judge what's going on; rather I stay engaged, and let the process unfold naturally. In the meantime, I'm also journaling, meditating, reading and walking; practices of presence that are part of the painting process. Typically, up to 15 layers of paint will be woven together until the painting feels finished. And how do I know when it's finished? One day the conversation is over. The painting isn't asking for anything more and it just feels right.

Eventually, a title feels right also. Titles come and go as I work because different meanings come and go. It's a fluid process, and when I finally decide on a title, I hope to create a doorway for the viewer to enter my painting. I want to create paintings that are meaningful for me, and at the same time open to interpretation for the viewer. So, my process isn't about illustrating something. It's more about letting something emerge that I didn't expect. An excerpt from my journal tells it this way: "When I paint without ego, there's only this moment, this gift of another day to live my life as it is right now. I'm learning to let the Holy breathe fresh air through my questions and my



All Encompassing

habitual little answers. I have the most magic and poetry when I get out of the way – when I surrender and paint with freedom and joy – without the debates, questions and critiques in my head. That head energy is useful for organizing my studio so there’s a physical flow, but oh my, it’s not adept at entering the deeper, more mysterious waters! And in that slice of deep water – that’s where my soul finds renewal. That’s the place of the most vivid colour, the movement turning in a spiral of presence, the sweet spot that is YES to life. I know and learn over and over that I do not enter the flowing waters alone. I get there through practices of presence; practices that subdue egocentric wanting and open me to unexpected possibilities.”

When I’m painting in all three centers, balanced and alertly there, a shift happens in consciousness. I seem to be in a deeper, steadier and quieter place. Meaning isn’t laid on, but is revealed and I’m grateful for the experience and the learning. Being creative helps me stay awake to life and that’s at the core of why I paint.

The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you
 Don’t go back to sleep!
 You must ask for what you really want.
 Don’t go back to sleep!
 People are going back and forth
 Across the doorsill where the two worlds touch
 The door is round and open
 Don’t go back to sleep!
 – Rumi

Being creative helps me stay awake to life and that’s at the core of why I paint.

Julie Elliot expresses her ideas in acrylic paint on canvas, with an emphasis on complex layers of paint within a simplified, often geometric composition. She studied painting, drawing and printmaking at Okanagan College, completing a Diploma of Fine Arts (Honors) in 1989, and continuing with selected studies at UBC Okanagan.

Over the past 25 years, Julie has developed a style that is marked by strong flat shapes, line and pattern within a richly textured surface. She has had solo exhibitions at the Vernon Art Gallery, the Penticton Art Gallery, and was part of a two person show at the Kelowna Art Gallery. As well, she has participated in numerous group shows and her work is included in private collections internationally, and in the public collections of the Governor General of Canada, the Kelowna Art Gallery, UBC Okanagan, the District of Lake Country and the Kelowna Public Art Collection. Julie is active in the local arts community and has extensive experience leading art retreats and classes. Currently she is completing the final phase of the Pacific Jubilee Program in Spiritual Deepening, Soul Development & the Art of Spiritual Direction. www.JulieElliot.com | www.pacificjubilee.ca

BATHING IN SENSATION

ARTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH A TREE

Lisa Lipsett



When we purposely combine sensory engagement with spontaneous creative expression, we activate a very powerful way to know self and earth that deepens heartfelt belonging, and gives us a heightened sense of well-being. We reap the emotional, physical and spiritual benefits of a nature connected creative life. This article briefly explores the theory and research behind sensory engagement with nature, shares an artful encounter with a tree, and invites the reader to develop a creative tree connection of their own.

SENSUAL ENGAGEMENT AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Each of us has the capacity to tune into nature through intuition, touch, listening, smell, taste and sight. By regularly shifting our everyday awareness to in-the-moment presence, through our senses, we strengthen this inherent capacity. Furthermore, drawing and painting with nature helps us to more easily make, and then sustain this shift into connection.

According to Eco-Art therapist, Theresa Sweeney, we have 54 senses that can help us to connect (Sweeney, 2013). Whether there are many senses

or just a handful, the point is we are sensuous creatures who are hard-wired to tune into the living world. Sweeney quotes Irish poet John O'Donohue to bring this point home.

“Human skin is porous; the world flows through you. Your senses are large pores that let the world in. By being attuned to the wisdom of your senses, you will never become an exile in your own life, an outsider lost in an external spiritual place that your will and intellect, have constructed.” John O'Donohue (1998), *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*

Further, art-making that helps us know ourselves and nature more fully is also our birthright. We are creative by virtue of being alive and embodied. So we can connect through our senses, then access our creativity as a way to track and deepen our experience. The act of creating in nature literally awakens more of our capacity to tune into the living world and ourselves.

Getting in touch with a tree.





Beautiful forest

Our awareness is deepened, and attention strengthened when more than one sense is engaged. When art-making, we can open to double or even triple perception as our ears tune into a sound and both hands track the rhythm, pitch and tone on a page, feeling the movement and texture of the sound, feeling the temperature and texture of the paint, and seeing the lines, forms and colours as they blossom on the page. Double sensing, also known as synaesthesia, is a neurological condition described in neuroscience, but in the arts it denotes those times when we experience more than one sense simultaneously. It is this simultaneous perception that cultural ecologist David Abram (1996) says really awakens our connection to the

living world. Further, there is a boundless exchange between self and nature that happens.

“There is an intimate reciprocity to the senses; as we touch the bark of a tree, we feel the tree touching us; as we lend our ears to the local sounds and ally our nose to the seasonal scents, the terrain gradually tunes us in turn. The senses, that is, are the primary way that the earth has of informing our thoughts and of guiding our actions.” - David Abram

GETTING OUTSIDE - THE BENEFITS OF FOREST BATHING

Forest Bathing or Shinrin-yoku, as it's called in Japan, is a bodily, emotional and multi-sensory experience. Participants open to a kind of forest aromatherapy, another experience of synaesthesia.

According to Florence Williams, in the December 2012 issue of *Outside* magazine, Shinrin-yoku was inspired by ancient Shinto and Buddhist practices, and is about letting nature enter the body through all five senses. People come out from the city and literally shower in the greenery.

Forest Bathing researcher, Yoshifumi Miyazaki, believes that because humans evolved in nature, it's where we feel most comfortable. He has taken more than 600 research subjects into the woods since 2004. In research conducted in 24 forest therapy trails in Japan, measures of physiological change related to the reduction of stress and experience of well-being have been monitored. These include salivary cortisol levels, blood pressure, pulse rate, and heart rate. Researchers have also recorded what they term mood states.

The studies of Shinrin-yoku provide valuable insights into the relationship between forests and human health. In particular, Miyazaki and his colleague Juyoung Lee have found that leisurely forest walks, compared with urban walks, yield a 12.4 percent decrease in the stress hormone cortisol, a seven percent decrease in sympathetic nerve activity, a 1.4 percent decrease in blood pressure, and a 5.8 percent decrease in heart rate. On subjective tests,



Top left: Tree sculpture - side view. artist unknown

Top right: Tree sculpture - front view. artist unknown

Above: Drawing with a tree

study participants also report better moods and lower anxiety. Forest Bathing researchers also found that it is not enough to simply power walk through the forest to attain these emotional and physiological benefits, rather multi-sensory engagement was key, as was a leisurely mind set and repeated exposure. Harvard physician, Eva M. Selhub, co-author of *Your Brain on Nature* concurs. She says a drop of nature is like a

drop of morphine to the brain, since it “stimulates reward neurons in your brain and it turns off the stress response”. Inspired by these findings, other countries like South Korea and Finland are now following suit with forest therapy trails of their own.

AN ARTFUL TREE ENCOUNTER

Deep forest art-making has always been a passion of mine. I love the silence, the sense of the community created by the many trees, and the rich oxygenated air. In that spirit, last weekend my daughter and I participated in the Opus Outdoor Painting Challenge on Granville Island in Vancouver. Though not deep in the forest, how marvellous it was to see so many people quietly and fully engaged with the rolling lawns, rippling water, seagulls, crows, mini forest and people strolling by, as they painted and drew.

During the challenge, I was immediately attracted to a round, hanging, bee hive like ring made of tree branch cross sections. I loved its full roundness, its warm amber colour and interesting pattern of repetitive shapes. I especially loved how it framed the tree behind, like a woody looking glass.

To begin my art-making session, I sat down on the ground facing the sculpture and began first by closing my eyes and listening, then I drew with my left hand, then my right, then both hands as my eyes slowly explored the contours and patterns of the tree and sculpture I was seeing. I became fascinated very quickly with the mottled grey bark of the tree that the sculpture hung upon. Once again, my eyes slowly tracked the ridges in its surface while my hands together and in turn tracked lines on the page. Suddenly, a large black ant crossed my page, and I tracked its movements following close behind with my pen as it meandered this way and that.

Then I moved to my wooden board and filled the amazing tree ring lines and swirls inherent in the wood with oil pastel, then layered this over with white gouache - a water-based paint that is thicker and creamier than watercolour. After, I scraped away at the surface with the sharp point of a



Top: Painting with a tree

Above: Finished painting

compass, following the lines of the hanging sculpture and tracing the shapes of the tree leaves.

There was a timeless, soft feeling to this creative session as spring's abundance of blossoms, greenery and sweet smells filled me up. My painting remains as a postcard from the experience.

TRY THIS

Wander your yard or neighbourhood with paint kit, pens, water and paper in hand. Open to a tree that calls to you. Commit to sitting with the tree for at least 20 minutes, three times a week for a month (see Jon Young's description of a Sit Spot in the references). Also to get you started, I outline the Create Cycle and an eight-day sense-based Creative Nature Connection art practice you can follow (see Sage-ing, Fall 2013, pages 20-23). I invite you to try a variety of sensory encounters with your tree. Play with movement, paint smell and texture, listen deeply, feel into your own breath, work from your intuition, work with your eyes closed, use both hands and your non-dominant hand, and be free and playful. Where do you sense this tree in your body? For added fun, I invite you to change your perspective while drawing and painting. See here for inspiration on how to flip your world upside-down. www.thedrivetocreate.com/2014/04/flip-your-world-drawing.html At the end of each session, reflect on something you noticed or wondered about. Share your experiences with someone.

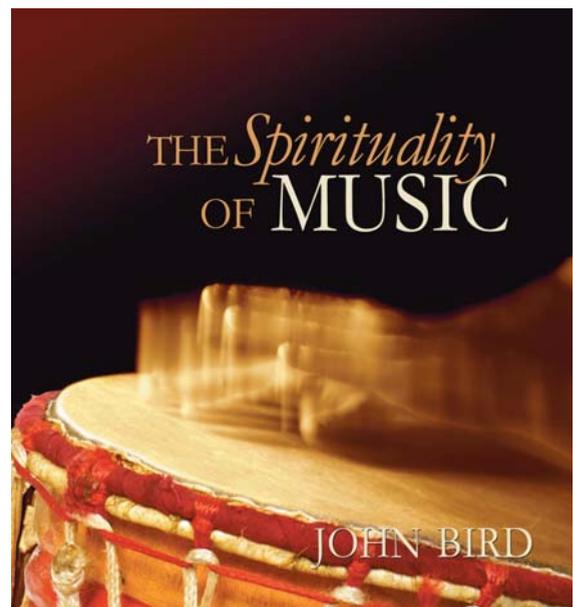
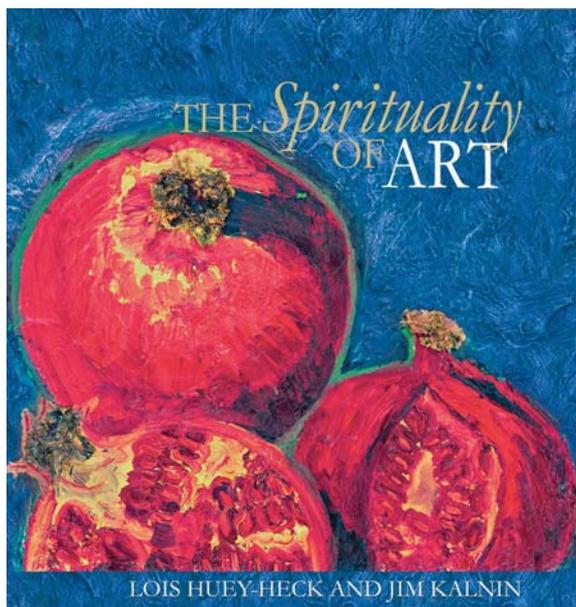
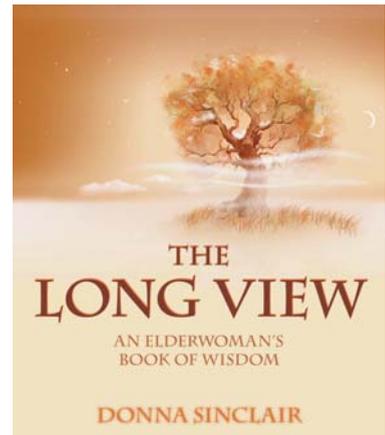
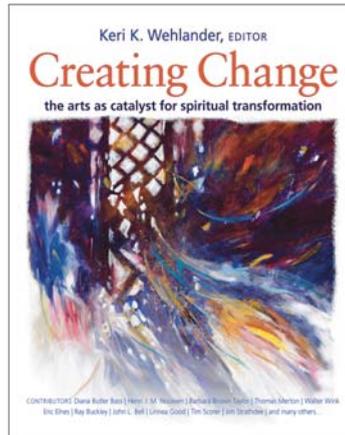
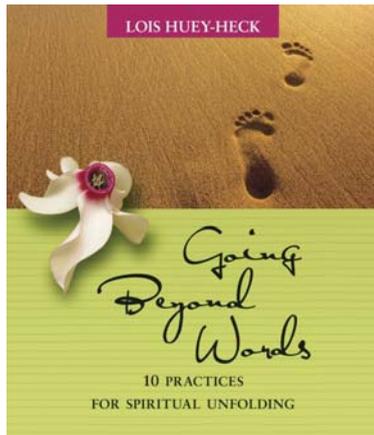
Learn more about Creative Nature Connection at www.creatvebynature.org

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Creative Aging Books

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SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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& Carolyn Cowan

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Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude exists to honour the transformational power of creativity. We are a quarterly journal intended as an initiative for collaboration and sharing. We present the opportunity for the free exchange of wisdom gleaned from creative engagement. We invite all ages to contribute their discoveries.

Sage-ing is about seeking - satisfying inner gnawing and transforming it to knowing and action. Ageing can be alchemy when one allows the realisation that to *Know Thyself* and contribute that knowing to our culture is indeed one of life's highest purposes. That knowing brings the gratitude, grace and integrity that a life deserves. The creative journey into self is a strong aid to health and well-being for the individual and to our culture.

This journal exists for all those serious in exploring their creativity, in a chosen expression. It is a forum for publication and exposure to other artists, both novice and established. This journal is an easel for any form of artistry undertaken out of personal intuition and imagination.