

South of the Garden

The Newsletter for the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South

Volume 29, Number 3

September, 2008

This & That

by Jeanette Stokes

Our friends have been in the news. Elaine Neil Orr was featured as the artist of the month in *Image*, a journal on arts and religion. You can view the story about her: imagejournal.org/page/artist-of-the-month/.

Elaine led a wonderful writing workshop for RCWMS in 2004. A professor of English at North Carolina State University where she teaches world literature and creative nonfiction writing, she is the author of *Gods of Noonday*, a memoir about growing up in Nigeria with Southern Baptist missionary parents. Her current project is an historical novel set in 1855 in Africa.

Meinrad Craighead was the focus of the cover story of the July 25, 2008 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*. "Art and Spirituality: In the Name of the Mother" offers photographs of Meinrad and of her vivid paintings. The reporter, Rich Heffern, spent a whole afternoon with Meinrad at her home under the cottonwoods in Albuquerque. They talked of Catholic theology, art, and Southwestern culture. The article is a good introduction to the artist and her work. Read it for yourself at: ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/1445.

RCWMS houses the Meinrad Craighead Documentary project. *Praying with Images*, an hour-long documentary about her, is in the final stages of editing. Executive Producer Amy Kellum hopes to go Albuquerque this fall to show Meinrad a rough cut of the video. More information about the film and the project will appear in these pages.

We have wonderful programs planned for the fall. There is still room in our Writing Week, September 26-October 3. For this one, participants may come for as few as two nights or as many as seven. See the Calendar for more details. September is such a beautiful time to be at the coast in North Carolina and a string of quiet days can be so renewing. You can write, read, or watch the pelicans and dolphins in the sea. The conversations and readings in the evening always prove to be interesting.

Bryant Holsenbeck will lead a bookmaking workshop for us in October. Over the course of three Tuesday evenings, participants will make their own sturdy journals. No experience is needed. I've been through the workshop, love it, and plan to do it again. Bryant is Artist in Residence at RCWMS this year. An environmental artist, she uses recycled materials in amazing ways. Just being around her is inspiring.

Anita McLeod and Margie Hattori have been leading retreats for women over fifty for the last four years. Through these retreats, dozens of women have enjoyed facing and reinterpreting their journey with aging. This fall Anita and Margie will offer a retreat with more quiet in it. During the retreat October 16-19, there will be more time for participants to be alone to write or contemplate. Give yourself a treat and let these wise women encourage you a little further down the path.

Hospice chaplain and United Methodist Minister Carolyn Burrus will lead a daylong workshop on end of life issues for us on All Saints Day, November 1. All are welcome.



Stars by Meinrad Craighead

Traces

by Jeanette Stokes

I met Katrina Browne ten years ago in California while there visiting friends. A recent graduate of Pacific School of Religion, she described a project she was undertaking. While in seminary she had learned that her family was descended from New England slave traders. Her plan was to retrace the Middle Passage with a group of her relatives. "Good Lord!" I thought. "That's a huge undertaking." I wished her the best of luck.

Ten years later, I received an email saying that Katrina Browne's film, *Traces of the Trade* would air on POV (Point of View) on PBS stations this summer. I almost shrieked with delight at the news. She did it! The documentary premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2008 and was picked up by POV afterwards. I have now seen the film, attended a conference on it, and read a companion book.

Katrina's ancestors, the DeWolfs of Bristol, Rhode Island, were the largest and most successful slave-trading family in Early America. At first she thought they were an aberration, since New England was famous as abolitionist territory. Much to her horror, she learned that the whole town of Bristol was entangled in the slave trade and that the economy of New England was dependent on it. Even after slavery was abolished in northern states, textile mills in the North relied on southern plantations to supply them with cotton grown by enslaved people. That's why she subtitled the film *A Story of the Deep North*.

The DeWolfs brought over 10,000 people from Africa to the Caribbean and North America in a lucrative, dangerous, and vertically integrated business. They carried rum from New England to the west coast of Africa where they traded it for Africans. They took the Africans to Cuba or sold them in Charleston, SC. They picked up sugar and molasses in Cuba and took it to New England to make into rum. Before it was all over they owned warehouses, ships, sugar plantations in Cuba, rum distilleries, and the company to insure it all.

This went on for three generations, from 1769 to 1820. Even after importing slaves was illegal in the U.S., the DeWolfs continued the triangular trade, leaving the Africans in Cuba. Political favors kept U.S. officials from interfering. They were so successful that one DeWolf trader was the second wealthiest man in the U.S.

Katrina found nine relatives to journey with her from Bristol to Ghana and on to Cuba. Along the way, the family struggled with the meaning of slavery—for them and for white America. The film documents their psychological and geographical journey. Tom DeWolf captured his experience of the journey in *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History*.

The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina held a conference in early September and showed the documentary. Another of the family members, Dain Perry, and his wife Constance were present to lead discussion. Unitarians have developed a religious education curriculum to accompany the film. I recommend the film as well as the resources you will find at: www.tracesofthetrade.org.

Calendar

RCWMS sponsored events are marked with *.

September 13, 2008, 2:00 pm
THE FACE UP BUS BIKE MURAL TOUR
Center for Documentary Studies (CDC), Durham, NC
Visit an exhibit at CDC, follow a map to a dozen murals in southwest central Durham, meet mural artist Brett Cook, and learn how he created images of Pauli Murray and other figures. Travel by reserved bus, bike, or car. Free. All ages welcome.
Contact: Courtney Reid-Eaton, reideatn@duke.edu, 660-3663; or Barbara Lau, balau@duke.edu, 660-3676

*September 18-21, 2008
A MEDITATION RETREAT: Wisdom and Compassion in the World
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
Leaders: Therese Fitzgerald, director of Dharma Friends, Maui, Hawai'i, has decades of Dharma practice at the San Francisco and Tassajara Zen Centers and was ordained as a Dharma teacher by Thich Nhat Hanh. Wendy Johnson is an ordained lay dharma teacher in the traditions of Thich Nhat Hanh and the San Francisco Zen Center. She was one of the founders of the farm program at Green Gulch Zen Center near San Francisco and is the author of *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate: At Work in the Wild and Cultivated World*.
Cost: \$450 double, \$500 single (includes room & meals)
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

READINGS BY WENDY JOHNSON (see above)
Wendy Johnson will read from *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate: At Work in the Wild and Cultivated World* (www.gardeningatthedragonsgate.com) in NC:
Sept. 15, 7:00p, Regulator, Durham
Sept. 16, 8:15p, Zen Center, Chapel Hill
Sept. 17, 7:00p, Pomegranate, Wilmington
Sept. 23, 9:30a, Wing Haven Garden, Charlotte
Sept. 23, 7:00p, Joseph-Beth Booksellers, Charlotte
Sept. 24, 7:00p, Malaprop's, Asheville

September 19-20, 2008
ENNEAGRAM & LIFE TRANSITIONS
Lutheran Church of the Epiphany, Winston-Salem, NC
Leaders: Sandra Smith, Jeanine Siler Jones, and Ruth Hill
Cost: \$175 (includes Saturday lunch)
Contact: sandracsmith@charter.net

September 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 15, 2008, 9:30-1:30 pm
CONVERSATIONS WITH MEINRAD CRAIGHEAD
Meinrad Craighead's Studio, Albuquerque, NM
In this series for women, Meinrad will talk about art and spirituality and participants will share their own images.
Cost: \$100.00 for each four-hour session.
Contact: Luanne.Lee@mac.com

September 26, 9:30 am-2:00 pm
PEACE HILL DAY: A day of mindfulness and reflection.
The Stone House, Mebane, NC
Contact: mwiggin@duke.edu

*September 26-October 3, 2008
A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
An unstructured week of writing for women at the beach. Come for the whole week or for a few days.
Cost: \$660 for week, \$100 per night, with room & meals
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

September 29-October 3, 2008
SOLATIDO: a Southern Singer/Songwriters' Workshop
Wildacres Retreat, Little Switzerland, NC
Share music and learn from peers in a non-competitive, supportive environment.
Featuring: Carrie Newcomer, recording artist
Cost: \$275 double (includes room, food, and workshop)
Contact: www.solatido-workshop.net



*October 14, 21, & 28, 2008, 7:00-9:00 pm
BOOKMAKING WORKSHOP Durham, NC
Make whimsical, usable books and discuss approaches to recording our lives. Make paste paper, cover book boards, sew the Coptic stitch, and use found papers to enhance the inside of a book. All skill levels welcome.
Leader: Bryant Holsenbeck, artist
Cost: \$75 for 3-part workshop (plus \$10 materials fee)
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

October 15-19, 2008
UU WOMANSPiRIT
The Mountain, just outside Highlands, NC
A joy-full, power-full, spirit-filled retreat. Green your spirit and the earth through experiential workshops, participatory worship, networking with like-minded women, and just plain fun.
Cost: institute, Oct. 15-17, \$143; gathering, Oct. 17-19, \$143
Contact: www.uuwomenspirit.org

*October 16-19, 2008
WISE CHOICES: Deep Rest and Deep Listening
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
This retreat for women in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and beyond provides time and a safe place to explore the issues of aging that most interest you. We'll offer resources for writing, making art, meditation, body movement, and reading material on aging, but days will be unstructured. Evenings we'll come together for conversation.
Leaders: Anita McLeod & Margie Hattori
Cost: \$450, single; \$425, double (includes room & meals)
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

October 23, 2008, 2:00 pm
20th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION of Sallie Bingham
Center for Women's History and Culture
Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC
Speakers: Sallie Bingham, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Paula Burger, Jeanette Stokes, Beth Ann Koelsch, and Danette Pachtner
Contact: kelly.wooten@duke.edu, 919-660-5967

October 25, 2008, 8:30 pm
AN EVENING WITH CARRIE NEWCOMER
The ArtsCenter, Carrboro, NC
Cost: \$15-17
Contact: 919-929-2787, www.artscenterlive.org

*November 1, 2008, 9:00 am-4:30 pm
A GOOD DEATH: How Faith Shapes our Understanding of the End of Life
Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, Durham, NC
Faith-based and Christian materials will aid in discussions and decisions about the end of life.
Leader: Carolyn Burrus, pastor and Hospice chaplain
Sponsor: RCWMS
Cost: \$50
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

November 2, 2008, 3:00-7:00 pm
BLESSING ENDINGS & BEGINNINGS: All Soul's Day
New Hope Camp & Conference Center, Chapel Hill, NC
Blend Christian All Soul's Day and Mexican "el día de los muertos" to recognize endings of loved ones, projects, and phases of life, with reverence and even humor.
Leaders: Nancy Corson Carter and Allison Davidson
Cost: \$35
Contact: 919-383-1338, nccarter@nc.rr.com

November 7-8, 2008
ON FORGIVING THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU:
A Weekend with Sophy Burnham
Montreat Conference Center, Black Mountain, NC
This workshop will explore the difficulties of forgiving and some ways to forgive others and ourselves.
Leader: Sophy Burnham, author, mystic, and healer
Cost: \$170-190
Contact: Holy Ground, www.holygroundretreats.org, 828-236-0222

Chilies

Alison Louise Harney won third place in the 2007 RCWMS Essay Contest. Her essay, Chilis, Please, is printed here. Originally from Atlanta, Alison has a BA from Colorado College and is currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at UNC Wilmington.

The phrase “women and ministry in the South” makes me crave really spicy food. Having been raised on broccoli florets with butter sauce, dry chicken, Rice-a-Roni, and an enormous helping of women, ministry and the South, the topic triggers an adolescent sense of revolt. In fact, when my mother forwarded me an email about writing an essay on “Women and Ministry” where? Oh! In the South! I had to go to the vending machine to buy BBQ peanuts.

One must understand that my childhood dinners of dry fowl and frozen vegetables were accompanied by my ferocious mother—Reverend H. (You don’t usually think of Episcopalians as being “ferocious,” that term seems more apt for Southern Baptists or a lion, but trust me.) Now my mother claims to be “allergic” to spice (some call that flavor), which resulted in tacos made with beef, ketchup and lettuce and stir-fry consisting only of shrimp and mushrooms. However, I theorize she has no allergy; it is really that her organs are actually red peppers filled with goop—something akin to the pumpkin’s interior but more caustic, flammable. She is on fire for women and ministry in the South.

During these dinners my older sister never said much except perhaps some uttering about a chicken farm in Montana that gives their birds organic corn cakes, and I sat low for most of the conversation that flew vertically along the table. My mother would curse the pope and indict him for the AIDS epidemic while my father, cutting with those stupidly small knives, hollered with his mouth full, “isn’t that something” or “you see, that IS the trouble!” After stomaching another bland meal, I’d say something slightly off topic, like, “Well, nobody at my school thinks boys are better than girls, I mean if anything, we’re better than they are.” To which my mother would respond wagging her finger, “Oh little girl, you don’t know anything yet.”

As is true in so many cases, she unfortunately was right. Little girls don’t know anything. But one thing I did know was that whining over “the patriarchal hierarchy” and the “masculine spiritual leaders” was so 1970 and it was, like, um, 1992, Mom!

“Do you realize that women weren’t ordained in the Episcopal Church in Georgia until 1976?” she would say pouring salt onto a piece of cantaloupe.

“Yes, so I’ve heard. Do you realize I wasn’t even born then? Welcome to the present tense.” I’d respond feeling really clever, welcome to the present tense! whatever that meant. My sister would begin to clear the dishes and my father would push back his chair and look at his lap, where his hands were now folded. He’d glance up occasionally to see if the praying mantis would eat the cricket tonight.

Usually, I was saved by a phone call or the dog eating the garbage before I had time to learn anything. Honestly, I did know my mom’s job was cool in some way, that it wasn’t a very normal job for a mother. When I was about eight, I told a girl in ballet class that my mom was a priest, and she replied, “Yeah right, and my mom is the Easter Bunny.” Obviously, she was an antiquated Catholic, but this had completely perplexed me at the time. Later, it started to make sense – yeah, women weren’t allowed to do this until recently. Hey, wait, my mom is a pioneer.

In school we learned about the Civil Rights Movement and the Women’s Movement. We learned that people hadn’t always had the same privileges. But it was all so abstract. I didn’t know what it was to be a woman. What it was to love a man. What it meant to find work in certain fields, to make decisions about family and career where



the models were absent. In high school, I continued to learn what had happened in D.C. (where I’d never visited), to argue about abortion rights (when I’d never had sex), and to absorb (with contempt) my mother’s theology.

My mom had been a parish priest, then a religion teacher and then she had had enough. In 1995 she opened her own nonprofit called Mary and Martha’s Place with the mission to create a place for women of all denominations and faiths to come together for supplemental spiritual guidance and nurturing. She recognized that women didn’t want to leave their traditions and the communities surrounding their churches or synagogues, but that many were unfulfilled due to the traditional masculine structures of organized religion. She believed that many of the issues women most need spiritual support for—such as child rearing, caring for their elders, balancing family and careers—were modern topics that old traditions didn’t always address.

Again, I knew what she was doing was important but it was also so annoying. At times I couldn’t help but view it as the “crazy, old ladies club.” They would get together for the summer solstice, adorned in unflattering white dresses, and light candles and sing songs while beating on tambourines. It was all very embarrassing. And then there’s the winter fundraiser, “Women, Chocolate and the Arts.” Oh my god, barf. I always loved the event—the speakers, the artists selling work, the desserts—but come on, the title of the event still makes me want to hide under a quilt. I just imagine these loony, menopausal women, wearing their glass blown earrings from the last dessert party, half the group fanning herself with a paper plate, and piles of Hershey wrappers balled around the table, as they decide, yes! Yes, we’ll call it “Women, Chocolate and the Arts.”

When I was twenty-five I moved back to Atlanta after seven years out west. At that point I had no god. I had little faith in myself or in the world. The last time I had attempted to go to church on Easter I’d left after the first ten minutes because I was too hung over. In San Francisco the words “Jesus” and “Christianity” put up people’s armor—among my peers Christianity had been boiled down to mean only fundamentalists, only conservative, narrow-minded, fear-driven people. Christians were the hypocrites, the people who started wars. Then, if you included the other dirty word, “southern,” you were really going to be judged. For many of my western-bred friends the South was not a place you would ever visit, much less live. I tended to agree, but knew where I came from was different from their perceptions, knew we were a different kind of southern Christian. I didn’t know how to explain it, so that part of me became very small. I started to forget that the word “faith” doesn’t have to be coupled with “blind,” and that believing in one’s god felt very similar to believing in one’s self.

My parents let me live in their house until I got my finances afloat. And, as life will have it, one of my mother’s spiritual groups met in the house. It was the young women’s group – how convenient. I was hesitant. I figured these women had probably never left the South and were bemoaning the fact that they were still single at twenty-five. Not into it. But, they met in our living room, and they used my bathroom (“oh my god, mom, I know, the bathroom will be clean.”) Point being I went to the young women’s group and I liked it.

This was the first time I understood women, ministry and the South. The first time I allowed myself to be just another lost woman in the South, from the South. I needed to be administered, guided as to how I might handle the challenges life presents. I wanted to do things with my life but I was scared. On those Monday nights, sipping tea from the chipped-lipped, “God is not a Boy’s Name” mug, I saw how my mother was a mother to many, how much these young women needed and respected her, what a service she was offering. We did not have to wake up on Sunday morning, we did not have to give money, we did not have to believe in any one or two things. We did not have to have convictions; we just had to come together to talk and listen, to believe in each other if nothing else—while calmly simmering in her high-backed, pink armchair, all that fire warmed us.

Calendar...

January 3-13, 2009

LADIES, LOVERS, AND LEADERS: Experiencing the Stories of the Biblical Women (and Men!)
A storytelling trip to Israel/Palestine.
Leader: Tracy Radosevic, Biblical Storyteller
Cost: \$2298 from Baltimore
Contact: Tracy Radosevic, Tracy@tracyrad.com

*January 4-11, 2009

A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
An unstructured week of writing for women at the beach.
Please come for the whole week.
Cost: \$660, includes room and meals
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*February 19-22, 2009

FINDING YOUR MEDIUM: A Weekend of Art at the Beach with Sue Sneddon
The Boat House, Emerald Isle, NC
"I can't draw a straight line." Who said you should? Pack up some art supplies and head to the beach. Sue Sneddon will help you explore a variety of media for painting and drawing: pencil, pen and ink, charcoal, pastel, oil pastel, watercolor, gouache and acrylics.
Leader: Sue Sneddon has been a fulltime painter since 1984. She lives at the coast and much of her work has concentrated on the ocean.
Cost: workshop, \$300; housing at The Boat House, \$100 double or \$200 single; food will be a joint effort.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

March 3-4, 2009

PHYLLIS TRIBLE LECTURE SERIES: Scandalous Women and Religious Traditions
Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC
Lecturers: Elizabeth Clark, Emilie Townes, Phyllis Tribble
Contact: divinity.wfu.edu/tribble-lectures.html

*April 30-May 3 2009

WISE CHOICES: A Retreat for Women Over 50
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
Leaders: Anita McLeod & Margie Hattori
Cost: \$500 for a single, \$475 for a double
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*May 10-17, 2009

A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
An unstructured week of writing for women at the beach.
Please come for the whole week.
Cost: about \$660, includes room and meals
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*June 12-14, 2009

RCWMS ANNUAL BEACH WEEKEND: Yoga with Amy
Come rest and enjoy the ocean. Have time alone as well as time and conversation with others. Yoga sessions will be led by Amy Kellum, a certified yoga instructor trained in the Kripalu method. No experience necessary.
Leaders: Amy Kellum and Jeanette Stokes
Cost: \$375 single, \$350 double
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

Contest

2008 RCWMS ESSAY CONTEST

The Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South is sponsoring its sixth essay contest. Women eighteen years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1400 words or less. Essays should focus on or exemplify feminist perspectives on spirituality and daily life. We want women to write about their lives, grace, how they experience God, or how they make it through the hard places. No sermons, please.

Prizes will be \$300 for first place, \$200 for second place, and \$100 for third place. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in March 2009. Winners will be notified by mail.

The limit is two essays per person. Submit four double-spaced copies of each essay. Do not put your name on the essay. Attach a cover letter with the title of the essay(s), your name, address, phone number, and e-mail. Submissions must be postmarked by November 15, 2008. Mail submissions to:

RCWMS Essay Contest
1202 Watts Street
Durham, NC 27701

No e-mail submissions are permitted. Manuscripts will not be returned.

This essay contest is made possible in part by a grant from the Clifford A. and Lillian C. Peeler Family Foundation.

RCWMS

The RCWMS Board greatly appreciates contributions of time, energy, and money to RCWMS. We are especially grateful for support from the Clifford A. and Lillian C. Peeler Family Foundation, the Kalliopeia Foundation, the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, and the E. Rhodes and Lona B. Carpenter Foundation. To make a financial contribution or to volunteer to help with office tasks, mailings, or program planning, contact the RCWMS office or see us on the web at www.rcwms.org.

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