

# South of the Garden

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

Volume 30, Number 2

June, 2009

## Meinrad

by Jeanette Stokes

When Amy Kellum attended visionary artist Meinrad Craighead's slide lecture at Duke University in 1999, her understanding of God got bigger, a lot bigger. It exploded, making room for the feminine divine. She signed up for a workshop at Meinrad's studio in Albuquerque, and that did it. Amy was hooked. The next time Meinrad lectured in Durham, Amy chauffeured her around and asked, "What are you going to do with those slides?" "I'm leaving them to someone in my will," Meinrad answered. "No," Amy persisted, "what are you going to do with them *now*?" "Oh, you can do something with them if you want to. I'm tired. Can we talk about this tomorrow?"

Tomorrow turned into years as Amy figured out how to preserve Meinrad's work and share her message. She bought a video camera, enrolled in Duke's Center for Documentary Studies, and filmed Meinrad's lectures around the country. She made a ten-minute film about Meinrad (see [www.meinradproject.org/about](http://www.meinradproject.org/about)). When she wondered what to do next, I suggested she make an hour-long PBS-quality documentary. "How do I do that?" Amy asked. The answer was easy: the Minnow gals.

Donna Campbell and Georgann Eubanks of Minnow Media said they'd be happy to work on a film about Meinrad and that it would cost \$100,000. Amy and I almost fainted, but she got right on it. Amy created the Meinrad Craighead Documentary Project at RCWMS and began her main job as the Executive Producer of *Meinrad Craighead: Praying with Images*—raising money.

Amy's friend Becky Carver made the first gift in April 2005. Four years, 500 donors, and \$120,000 later, the film is finished! In four years, Amy made seven trips to NM, attended Meinrad's lectures in four US cities, and accompanied the artist to Paris, Florence, Rome, and Barcelona. The film crew went to NM twice and interviewed twenty people. Georgann wrote a brilliant script capturing the essence of Meinrad's life and work, Donna edited hours of tape into a fabulous film.

The first public screening was Thursday, May 21, 7:00 pm, at the Nasher Museum at Duke. We chose the Nasher because of its elegant environment and exquisite sound and projection system, but Amy worried we'd run out of seats. The auditorium only holds 190. At 6:45 there were still empty seats, but then people started pouring in. We knew the Nasher wouldn't let anyone stand.

With Meinrad sitting in the front row, Amy and I stepped up to the mic, Amy looking happier than I had ever seen her. I began, "Welcome, and some of you will have to leave the room." After the opening, I ran out to see if I could help with the extra people. The Nasher opened two overflow rooms and 263 people got to see the film. When I returned to the darkened auditorium and sat down on the back row, I leaned my head back against the wall and breathed a sigh of relief. I looked up at the screen and could not believe my eyes. The images were large and luscious, image after image of Meinrad's work. The narration was compelling in Courtney Reid-Eaton's reassuring voice and Meinrad's quotes were read soulfully by Randa McNamara. It was astonishing.

It worked! People came. The film was gorgeous and Meinrad had a good time. What a night!



Meinrad Craighead photo by J. Stokes

## Tibbie

by Jeanette Stokes

I've known Tibbie Roberts since the late 1970s when, just out of seminary, I joined the NC Council of Churches Committee for the Equal Rights Amendment of which she was a member. Older than my mother, she was one of the sturdy United Methodist women who kept the committee going.

When I saw Tibbie at a meeting last winter, she proudly announced she was 94 years old. As bright and energetic as ever, she claimed to have driven herself the three hours from Morehead City to Raleigh that day. Seeing her made me wonder whether her papers had been archived, so I called her soon after and asked. She was interested, so I got her in touch with Laura Micham at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke (which houses RCWMS's papers). Since I was going to the coast in February for our art workshop, I arranged to pick up some of Tibbie's papers in Morehead City. Amelia Stinson-Wesley, who was on the Equal Rights committee in its later years, wanted to go along—to the workshop and most of all to see Tibbie.

When Amelia and I arrived at Tibbie's house that bright February morning, she had piles of papers and photographs all laid out for us. Instead of just loading them into the car, however, she wanted to tell us about them, so we spent a couple of hours going through the many and varied committees, events, and trips represented. I knew Tibbie was amazing but had no idea she had been involved in so many things.

Tibbie Roberts was often present when history was made and had papers, pictures, and tote bags to prove it. She was elected as a delegate from NC to the National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977. Over 20,000 people gathered to celebrate International Women's Year and identify goals for women for the next decade.

In the late 1970s, the NC Council of Churches asked Tibbie to coordinate a statewide campaign to increase the religious support for the ERA. While Tibbie was considering this request, her Aunt Lena found something Tibbie's grandmother, Laura Nelson Duncan, had written in 1878 while a student at Greensboro College. Entitled *Turnabout is Fair Play*, the piece began, "Move over you liege lords, and let the ladies show you what they can do!" Tibbie said that was all the encouragement she needed. She wrote the Council of Churches saying that her grandmother had spoken from the grave and that she'd take the job.

After the ERA failed, the NC Council of Churches committee became the Equal Rights Committee and kept going for another twenty years, Tibbie right along with it. She participated in the NC Council for Women and is still a member of The Women's Forum of NC.

She served two terms on the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and was their representative to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility. She represented ICCR at an AT&T shareholders meeting in the late 1980s. She traveled as a representative of the GBGM to China, Israel/Palestine, and to at least one country in Africa. She has been out of the country more than twenty times.

(Continued on back.)

# Calendar

\* = RCWMS events. See more at: [www.rcwms.org](http://www.rcwms.org).

June 10–11, 2009

**PENSTROKES: Writing and Retreat**

Aunt Myrt's House, a retreat center near Athens, GA  
This gathering of women will encourage and support the creative writing process. By focusing on the experience of inner hearing rather than "trying to say something," anxiety falls away. No prior writing experience is required.

Leader: Jane Penland Hoover, facilitator of Amherst Writers and Artists Method & Proprioceptive Writing®

Cost: \$165

Contact: 919-384-2820, [jpenstroke@yahoo.com](mailto:jpenstroke@yahoo.com)

\*June 12–14, 2009

**RCWMS ANNUAL BEACH WEEKEND: Yoga with Amy**  
Come rest and enjoy the ocean, have time alone and time with others. Enjoy several sessions of yoga led by Amy Kellum, a certified yoga instructor trained in the Kripalu method. Explore active and restorative yoga postures. All levels of experience are welcome.

Leaders: Amy Kellum and Jeanette Stokes

Cost: \$375 single, \$350 double, scholarships & discounts

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [rcwmsnc@aol.com](mailto:rcwmsnc@aol.com)

June 12–14, 2009

**INTERPLAY BEACH WEEKEND**

Trinity Retreat Center, Pine Knoll Shores, NC  
Ocean, sun and sand plus InterPlay in a beautiful coastal retreat setting. InterPlay is an active, creative way to unlock the wisdom of your body through movement, music, stories, stillness and affirmation.

Leaders: Ginny Going and Tom Henderson

Cost: \$160 for room and board. A donation of any amount for the leaders will be appreciated.

Contact: Ginny, [interplaync@nc.rr.com](mailto:interplaync@nc.rr.com), 919-821-3723

June 17-18, 2009

**CREATIVE FEMINIST MINISTERS: Education, Training, and Networking**

WATER office, Silver Spring, MD & by conference call  
Feminist ministers need education and training that seminaries do not provide because of their patriarchal biases. They also need the company of other women to test out ideas, share experiences, and figure out next steps in their own ministry. WATER is offering programs designed to train women in ministry in feminist approaches to pastoral arts. Join in person or by phone.

June 17, 10 am, Conversation at WATER with Surekha Nelavala and Mary Kate Birge

June 17, 1 pm, Conference call with Emilie Townes

June 18, 10 am, Conversation at WATER with Cindy Lapp and Mari Castellanos

June 18, 1 pm, Conference call with Marie Fortune  
Sponsor: WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual)

Cost: donations welcome

Contact: Anna Roeschley, WATER, [annabeth@hers.com](mailto:annabeth@hers.com)

\*June 28, 2009, Sunday, 2:00 pm

**COMMUNITY DOCUMENTARY SCREENING:**

*Meinrad Craighead: Praying with Images*

KiMo Theater, Albuquerque, NM

Join us for a screening of the hour-long documentary in the city where this remarkable visionary artist lives.

Contact: Amy Kellum, 919-418-4000,

[ak@meinradproject.org](mailto:ak@meinradproject.org), [www.meinradproject.org](http://www.meinradproject.org)

\*September 20–27, 2009

**A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN**  
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

RCWMS has reserved Pelican House, the retreat house on the beach at Trinity Center, for an unstructured week of writing for women. Please come for the whole week.

Cost: about \$660, includes room and meals

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [rcwmsnc@aol.com](mailto:rcwmsnc@aol.com)



Meinrad Craighead

October 15–18, 2009

**TRUE FREEDOM: Practicing the 7 Factors of Awakening**  
Mindfulness Meditation Retreat with Therese Fitzgerald  
The Stone House, Mebane, NC

This retreat will be conducted mostly in silence. Each day will include sitting and walking meditation, Dharma talks, mindful meals, yoga, and investigation of the teachings through Dharma discussions. Private interview sessions with Therese will be available. Recommended for beginning and experienced meditators.

Leader: Therese Fitzgerald is a Dharma mentor and meditation retreat leader. She is co-founder of Dharma Friends, lives on Maui, and was ordained by Thich Nhat Hanh. See [dharmafriends.org](http://dharmafriends.org).

Cost: sliding scale \$170-\$275 (before August 15)

Contact: Marilyn Hartman, [hartman@email.unc.edu](mailto:hartman@email.unc.edu), 919-403-0627

\*January 3–10, 2010

**A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN**  
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

(See September 20-27, 2009 for description.)

Cost: about \$680, includes room and meals

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [rcwmsnc@aol.com](mailto:rcwmsnc@aol.com)

\*February 18–21, 2010

**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." Well who said you should?

Isn't it time to pack up some art supplies and head to the beach? Sue Sneddon will be in residence at The Boat House on Emerald Isle for a weekend of exploration into various media for painting and drawing. These will include: pencil, pen and ink, charcoal, pastel, oil pastel, watercolor, gouache, and acrylics. Let's find the ones that float your boat! Bring any art supplies you'd like.

Leader: Sue Sneddon has been a fulltime painter since 1984. Much of her work has concentrated on the ocean, especially the NC coast. After 28 years in Durham, she moved to the coast to be closer to the water.

Cost: workshop, \$300; housing at The Boat House, \$100 double or \$200 single; food will be a joint effort. You may also arrange your own accommodations.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [rcwmsnc@aol.com](mailto:rcwmsnc@aol.com)

\*March 26–27, 2010

**WRITING WORKSHOP WITH CAROL HENDERSON**  
Durham, NC

Details to follow.

Leader: Carol Henderson teaches writing workshops and coaches writers at every skill level in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. She has published columns, reviews, essays, and feature stories. Her memoir, *Losing Malcolm: A Mother's Journey Through Grief*, is a redemptive story about the loss of a baby. Currently, she is editing several essay anthologies and memoirs. She lives in Chapel Hill, NC. Learn more about her:

[www.carolhenderson.com](http://www.carolhenderson.com)

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [rcwmsnc@aol.com](mailto:rcwmsnc@aol.com)

\*May 2–9, 2010

**A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN**  
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

(See September 20-27, 2009 for description.)

Cost: about \$680, includes room and meals

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [rcwmsnc@aol.com](mailto:rcwmsnc@aol.com)

\*March 2–3, 2010

**PHYLLIS TRIBLE LECTURE SERIES**

The Body in Sickness and in Health: Feminist Perspectives

Leaders: Phyllis Tribble, Christine Gudort, Margaret Miles, Gail O'Day, and Ann Belford Ulanov

Cost: \$100

Contact: [divinity.wfu.edu/tribble-lectures.html](http://divinity.wfu.edu/tribble-lectures.html)

# Father

*Snapshots of My Father*

by Danyelle O'Hara

Snapshot #1, *Lopsided Smile*, 1999

The picture is of my father and uncle sitting together on a bench outside a one-story institutional-looking building. It was taken six years ago during a visit in Pittsburgh, where my father's brother had recently taken a job and relocated their elderly father from Detroit into a nursing home. My father had come from California, I from North Carolina.

Visits with my father were infrequent. I had seen him two years earlier after he had a stroke, but prior to that, it had been seven years. My parents divorced when I was eight. Dismissing her marriage with my father as a "past life," my mother immediately set about creating a new life and family, complete with a new husband (whom my siblings and I were to call "Dad") within weeks of her divorce and a baby within a year. That, coupled with an unrelenting bitterness towards my mother that calcified my father's heart, made relationship with him difficult.

In the picture, my uncle is wearing a cotton button down shirt with a Mao collar and pressed cotton trousers. He's leaning back with both arms spread behind him on the bench. The sun is shining through the bushes to the left of the bench, making a spider web of shadows on that side of his face. The sun doesn't make him squint, though, and it doesn't interrupt the relaxed, amused smile on his lips that make him look like he's remembering the taste of a good wine.

My father is leaning forward with a metal cane resting against the inside of his right leg. He's been using the cane since his stroke, which partially paralyzed his left side. He's wearing black nylon exercise pants—the kind that swoosh with each step, whether you are exercising or merely walking to the bathroom. My father's shoulders are rounded in a cobalt-colored "Members Only" jacket that was in style in the 70's, and his elbows rest on the inside of his thighs. His hands hang between his legs. You can't tell from the picture, but the right hand is holding the paralyzed left hand in place.

Upon first glance, I don't notice a smile on my father's face. Upon closer inspection, I realize that although it's not an open-faced smile like his brother's, there is a smile. It is contained, just in his lips, and it's a half-smile since that's all the paralysis allows.

His glasses are slightly tilted, the top of the right lens covering part of his right eye. His brows are somewhat furrowed, although a tree shades his side of the bench. He's looking straight into the camera. Or straight at the photographer, who is me. Is he looking at me wondering who I am the way that I'm looking at this picture wondering who he is?

Snapshot #2, *Reading to Me*, 1973

I'm six. We live in Newport, Rhode Island in a big colonial house with a fireplace, French doors that separate the living room and TV room, and stairs that lead to a second story. I'm actually not sure if the house is big or if it just seems that way to my six-year-old sense of space.

I'm in the upstairs bedroom I share with my sister studying a Dr. Seuss book we received for Christmas, *One Spot Two Spots*. As I look at the black letters on the white pages for the hundredth time, I realize that I know what they are saying. They are more than a collection of letters dancing on the page—they are suddenly queued up as words, speaking to me. I am reading them. I can read!



I run downstairs, book in hand, to tell someone. I stop abruptly at the foot of the stairs to find my father in the living room. He is perhaps reading his own book, but what he is doing doesn't strike me as much as his mere presence. It is unusual for him to be in the house during the day. He is a naval officer, so during the day when he is not out to sea, he is at the naval base, not in our living room.

I am suddenly shy about my news. But still excited, I gather my courage and ask my father if he would like for me to read the book to him. He comes over to where I am standing, says, "Yes," and bends down to pick me up. I position myself in his arms and hold the book up to my face. I begin to read. It's slow going.

After a couple of pages my father gently sets me down, takes the book from me, and lowers himself to the bottom step. He pulls me onto his lap saying, "How about if I read?"

Even at that young age I understand the feeling of my insides crumbling. I understand that he didn't get it. That he had just so kindly, so unknowingly, robbed me of one my little life's first significant moments.

Snapshot #3, *Playing with Me*, 1974

It is Saturday afternoon in our house on a military base in Hawaii. It's the loneliest time of the week if you're seven and your older siblings are out with friends and your mother is busy. I slink around the house and spy my father in the cabinet under the kitchen sink. He's on his back wrestling with something. His presence once again surprises me. Here, even more than in Newport, he's away from our family so much that he's like a piece of furniture that doesn't belong when he's in the house.

I am fascinated to see him in such an intimate position somewhere so familiar to me. "What are you doing?" I ask, standing in the doorway. He inches out of the cabinet on his bottom, back, and elbows and pushes himself up into a sitting position, elbows on bent knees. "Oh," he says, perhaps as disoriented with my presence as I am with his, "I'm just fixing this pipe." Seeing that I accept the explanation, he turns the table. "What are you doing?" he asks me.

I advance into the kitchen and respond, "Nothing. I don't have anyone to play with."

"No one?" he asks, interested.

"No one," I confirm.

"Well, I'll play with you," he says.

I'm breathless with surprise and delight. I don't remember what we did, just the excitement of this familiar stranger's offer to play.

Snapshot #1 - *Again, Droopy Left Eye*, 1999

The picture was taken on a beautiful fall afternoon. The sun is at around 3:00, still bright, but softening. Tree shadows pour across the green lawn and cover most of the bench my uncle and father are sitting on.

It was the last time I saw my father. The last time I will see him.

At the funeral, my uncle told me that my father was always where the action was. He wasn't the life of the party, or even in the middle of it, just there. Is the lopsided smile actually a look of concentration? Is this the way he was at parties in his youth—on the fringe, intently observing? A familiar stranger.

(Continued on back.)

# Tibbie...

She was President of United Methodist Women (UMW), of the North Carolina Conference (eastern NC) when the controversial Re-Imagining Conference took place in Minneapolis in 1993. Sponsored by the World Council of Churches as part of its Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the conference was supported by national United Methodist funds. Tibbie sent a UMW delegate and took a lot of heat after the conference when conservative publicity painted the feminist gathering as heretical and pagan. She stood by her decision and supported her delegate.

She attended the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, whose theme was "Look at the World Through Women's Eyes." She went back to Beijing for a follow-up conference in 1999.

After going through the papers and loading them into the trunk of my car, Tibbie took us to lunch in her native Beaufort, just across the river. Tibbie's family in Beaufort goes way back to the 1700s, so after lunch we had a guided tour. Next she wanted to go to an art show, so we drove to the other end of town for that. Amelia and I dropped Tibbie back at her house mid-afternoon. Though we had planned to stop at the aquarium afterwards, we were too tired. Tibbie had worn us out, but we came away with a great idea—to have a 95<sup>th</sup> birthday party for her close to her birthday on June 2.

The secret of Tibbie's health and strength may be that she still goes to Curves three times a week. Or it might be how much she loves living and loves the people in her life. She raised four daughters, three of whom still live nearby and came to the birthday lunch in Raleigh. They enjoy their mother so much that they often take vacations with her.

I don't think I've ever seen Tibbie Roberts without her head in a scarf. She must have a huge collection of them, because they always match what she has on. At 95 her hair is still coal black, though I suspect she helps its color along. I'm not sure if it is still long, but it used to be really long, and she wore it wound up on top of her head. The scarf, with a wave of black hair peeking out, is a striking look. Dramatic.

She wore a bright green scarf the day thirteen of us met for birthday lunch at The Irregardless Cafe in Raleigh. Several others wanted to attend but couldn't. Amelia had gall bladder surgery. Former Equal Rights Committee members Bett Hargrave and Doris Morrison were home recuperating, Bett from a knee replacement and Doris from an injured foot. Mildred Fry, who is almost as old as Tibbie, was present, along with George Reed (director of the NC Council of Churches), Jean Rodenbough (the Council's new president), and more. We had a wonderful time.

The day Amelia and I were at Tibbie's house, I asked her if she was the oldest person in Morehead City who was still active. She paused a moment and said with a big smile, "I believe I am."

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Tibbie Roberts photo by J. Stokes

# Father...

I'm surprised that in this picture my father doesn't look as bad as I imagine him. In my mind he is stooped and empty, old before his time, withered with bitterness that hardened and ate him from the inside. He was those things, but he was other things, too. I had the same surprise looking into the casket at his wake. He was, of course, made up and in clothes that he probably never would have worn in real-life, but frankly, other than looking a little pale, he looked good. Not withered. Not stooped. Dead, for sure, but like he had led a life.

My father. I've never called him my father. I've always preferred to use his first name when referring to him and to use no name at all in his presence. Calling him my father acknowledges the uncomfortable truth that he is my father and that I have denied this reality for the better part of my life.

My parents' divorce was always an oily stain on my life. I understand now that the stain was less the divorce itself and more my mother's denial and my father's bitterness. Does this understanding at the moment of my father's death now qualify me to claim him — to call him my father and search around the rooms in my heart to make a place for him? It's safer, for certain. I can make a beautiful space now that there's no risk he'll untidy it.

In the picture I can see through my father's glasses to the heavy fold of his left eyelid. That eye always drooped slightly, but under his tinted glasses it wasn't immediately apparent. I don't have tinted glasses to hide my own droopy left eye, nor does my son, although he was three and a half before I noticed that his left eye was just like mine . . . and my father's.

As I grieve my father's death and nearly a lifetime of estrangement, as I learn to include this part of my life in the stories I tell about who I am, I look into my son's eyes. Like a string tied to my finger, there I find a constant reminder that, although he will never know him, my son is his grandfather's grandson. And this is a gracious invitation for me to accept that I am my father's daughter.

*Danyelle O'Hara is an RCWMS trustee and a consultant to social change nonprofits and foundations. She lives in Norman, Oklahoma with her partner, Marc, and their children, Jonah and Marjanne.*



Gifts from Nancy Peeler Keppel and grants from the Clifford A. and Lillian C. Peeler Family Foundation have supported our writing program for the last eight years. For more information on writing retreats, workshops, and groups watch the calendar or visit our website.

Jeanette Stokes, Executive Director  
Jennifer McGovern, Administrative Director  
Bryant Holsenbeck, Artist in Residence  
Jenny Graves, Intern



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