

South of the Garden

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

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September 2009

Words

by Jeanette Stokes

I sometimes wonder to myself, "How many words could a writer write if a writer would write words?" One day recently, I wrote for almost two hours in the morning, an hour or more in the afternoon, and then I edited for two hours that night. The next day, I said something about this to Liz Dowling-Sendor, our new Writer in Residence at RCWMS. Liz was once a journalist, so I told her that I don't see how reporters do it, write all day, and she said, "They don't." She said that two hours a day of writing was about all most humans could manage. I was surprised. I had been feeling like a total wimp, a fraud, because I could only manage an hour, or two tops, on the mornings I set aside for writing. Here's why.

A few years ago, I heard an author named Jane Yolen read at a local bookstore. She has published over 170 books, many of them wonderful historical fiction for young people. In the Q&A, I asked a question I often ask writers, "How do you get your work done? How are your days structured?" Yolen said that she writes for 8-10 hours a day. Maybe I heard her wrong. Maybe she said she *works* for eight to ten hours a day, spending some hours on correspondence or finances. Whatever she does, it works, and she has all those books to show for it. I have felt like a fake ever since.

In *Bird by Bird*, Annie Lamott says that if you write 300 words a day, in a year you will have written a book. That's even with time out for birthdays, Christmas, and going to the doctor. Three hundred words is about one page, double spaced. I thought she meant, "Any dummy can write 300 words a day." I took her at her word and started writing 300 words a day in my computer. That was fourteen or fifteen years ago. But those files rarely turn into a book. Well, OK, once, they became a book. The entries in 1997 and 1998 became *Hurricane Season*. But they become other things, like articles for this newsletter. I rearranged my life so that I write in the mornings, and I am very strict about my mornings. No appointments. No work for RCWMS. No email. (OK, I cheat on that all the time!) Nothing, except sometimes swimming, walking, or a writing group once a month. But that's all.

I rearranged my life to write. And I do it. And I'm really slow. But I have published books. For me, writing is all about making the time to do it. I have started a new writing practice with Liz. We call it TWT (trapped writing time). I'm at my computer and she's at hers. We pick a starting time, show up at our computers, and email each other, saying "OK go!" Then we write for 45 minutes, or until we can't stand it any more, and then email, "How are you doing?" We like to say that TWT is a B.I.T.C.H., which stands for "Butt In The Chair, Honey." Without sitting down to the writing, writing never happens.

So, I guess the question is, "How many words could a writer write if a writer would sit down?" Keep your pen moving or your fingers on the keyboard. Until we figure out how to get the words to go straight from our brains and to the page, we will simply have to sit down and write.



from Bryant Holsenbeck video

Notes

by Jeanette Stokes

THE MEINRAD VIDEO

We have had two very successful screenings of our new documentary, *Meinrad Craighead: Praying with Images*. We had approximately 250 people at the Nasher Museum in Durham in May and another 250 at the historic KiMo Theatre in Albuquerque in June. The big news is that we have already distributed 700 copies of the video. The response to the film has far exceeded our wildest dreams and we are now preparing for a second printing. Huge congratulations go to Executive Producer Amy Kellum and to the Minnow Media production team of Donna Campbell and Georgann Eubanks. So far, we have entered sixteen film festivals around the world and are waiting for our acceptance notices. To make a donation to the project or to order your very own copy of the video (\$35 includes shipping), send a check to RCWMS or go to www.meinradproject.org.

THE BRYANT HOLSENBECK VIDEO

We expected fifty or sixty people to show up for our screening of *Blackbirds, Bottle Caps, and Broken Records: Environmental Artist Bryant Holsenbeck at Work* on the second of August this year. When 150 people tried to cram themselves into a room meant for eighty, we finally had to offer a second screening of the 15-minute documentary. Bryant was turning sixty later that week, and the overflow crowd broke a six-decade-long curse for Bryant, who claimed that no one was ever in town to celebrate her birthday the first week of August.

This was an amazing project. When we had the idea a year ago, we had no idea where we'd get a filmmaker who would fit our budget. Our intern, Jenny Graves, said she had a friend who had a housemate who made films, and we said, "Bring her around." The friend turned out to be Margaret Morales, who, at twenty-two years of age, produced a first-rate documentary. When the project was finished, Margaret told me in passing that she had never held a video camera until eighteen months before. You certainly can't tell it from the quality of the product. Margaret has now gone off to Peru to work on another film project for the fall.

Portions of the film about Bryant will be on her website, bryanholsenbeck.com, and she will use the film in schools and museums as she travels around and continues her work. She addresses the environmental crisis in this country by using art to make people more aware of the huge quantity of stuff we throw away.

JENNY

Jenny Graves, our beloved intern for the last year and a half, has left us for a graduate program in Cultural Anthropology at Temple in Philadelphia. Jenny was great to have around and helped us with grant writing, fundraising, and program planning. She was instrumental in the production of the Bryant Holsenbeck video, meeting with the team frequently over the course of the nine months of project development and filming. During the summer, Jenny led an intergenerational writing group that met once a week for five weeks. We miss Jenny already.

Calendar

* = RCWMS events. See more at: www.rcwms.org.

September 12, 2009, Saturday, 9:00 am–1:00 pm
INTRODUCTION TO THE ENNEAGRAM
Ghost Ranch Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM, \$60
Leader: Jeannene Wiseman, jeanneneww@yahoo.com

*September 18, 2009, 2:00 pm
CLERGYWOMEN IN PRINT
Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC
Women in ministry will celebrate new books by Susan Dunlap, Margot Starbuck Hausman, & Jeanette Stokes
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*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. Come for all or part of the week.
Cost: \$660 week, \$100 night, includes room and meals
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

September 28–October 2, 2009
SOLATIDO: Retreat for Writers of Song, Poetry, & Prose
Wildacres Retreat, Little Switzerland, NC
Contact: www.solatido-workshop.net

*October 14–Nov. 4, 2009, Wednesdays, 7:00–9:00 pm
WRITING FROM OUR WOUNDS: A Spiritual Practice
Durham / Chapel Hill, NC
Leader: Liz Dowling-Sendor, RCWMS Writer in Residence
Cost: \$80
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

October 15–18, 2009
TRUE FREEDOM: Meditation with Therese Fitzgerald
The Stone House, Mebane, NC, \$185–\$290
Contact: Marilyn, hartman@email.unc.edu, 919-403-0627

*October 17, 2009, Saturday, 9:30–4:30pm
WISE CHOICES: A Day for Women over 50
Durham, NC
Spend a day in a circle of women as we create a new vision of ourselves as elder women.
Leaders: Anita McLeod and Margie Hattori
Cost: \$55-85 sliding scale
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

October 21–25, 2009
CRONES COUNSEL, Atlanta, GA
Contact: www.cronesounsel.org

October 23–25, 2009
WEEKEND OF SELF-CARE AND RENEWAL
Near Boone, NC, \$250–275, includes lodging and meals
Learn and practice self-care in a small group of women.
Leaders: Debra Brazzel, yoga; Heather Brewer, wellness
Contact: Debra, debra.brazzel@gmail.com, 919-361-3400

October 30–31, 2009
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EDUCATED WOMAN? Symposium in honor of Jean O'Barr
Sallie Bingham Center, Duke Univ., Durham, NC
Contact: Bingham Center, 919-660-5967

November 1, 2009, Sunday
KATE CAMPBELL in a Benefit Concert
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC
Contact: 919-494-2033, www.katecampbell.com

November 12–13, 2009, Thursday & Friday
DUKE DIVINITY WOMEN'S CENTER: 35th Anniversary
Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC
Special guests: Jill Raitt, Teresa Berger, Mary McClintock Fulkerson, and former Women's Center Directors
Contact: mfulkerson@div.duke.edu



*November 14, 2009, 1:00–5:00 pm
RCWMS BOOK FAIR
1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC
Buy books for the holidays and hear authors read.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

November 13–15, 2009
WALKING THE LABYRINTH: With Lauren Artress
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Greensboro, NC
Cost: \$10 Friday lecture, \$95 Saturday workshop
Contact: Marjorie Donnelly, info@LabyrinthKeepers.com

November 14, 2009, 7:00 pm
COMMUNITY SING & DANCE FOR HUNGER RELIEF
Durham Friends Meeting, Durham, NC
Join the Bodies, Voices & Spirit Community Chorus and Kathleen Hannan in a benefit for local food banks.
Contact: merpig@juno.com, 919-644-1592

November 18–22, 2009
The YOGA of SOCIAL CHANGE: with Claudia Horwitz
The Stone House, near Chapel Hill, NC
Cost: \$75–200 plus gift to teacher, includes room & meals
Contact: Claudia@stonecircles.org

December 4–5, 2009
SHARON SALZBERG
Eno River Unitarian Fellowship in Durham, NC
Contact: www.flyingmonkey.ws/ssalzberg.html

*January 3–10, 2010 (see September for description)
A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
Cost: about \$680, includes room and meals
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*January 16, 2010
GET YOUR GANGES ON
Durham, NC
Follow your own inner sacred river. Explore practices to bring greater awareness to your particular callings, and discover how these can energize and be expressed through work of any sort.
Leader: Peggy Payne, spiritual novelist and consultant
Details: TBA

*February 18–21, 2010
FINDING YOUR MEDIUM: A Weekend of Art at the Beach with Sue Sneddon
The Boat House, Emerald Isle, NC
Sue Sneddon will lead 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.
Leader: Sue Sneddon is a painter living near the ocean
Cost: \$300, plus \$100 double, \$200 single, or arrange your own accommodations. Food's a joint effort.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*February 27, 2010
WOMEN'S SOULFUL CIRCLES
Durham, NC
For thousands of years, women have gathered in circles to share their lives, to support and learn from one other. Sitting together and sharing stories of our lives deepens our relationships with others and with ourselves. Within the safety of a structured circle, you will learn the basic practices of council sharing. Come to experience a safe women's circle and learn to create your own community.
Leader: Anita McLeod
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*March 26–27, 2010
WRITING WORKSHOP WITH CAROL HENDERSON
Durham, NC
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*May 2–9, 2010 (see September for description)
A WEEK OF QUIET AND WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
Cost: about \$680, includes room and meals
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

Pauli

by Liz Dowling-Sendor

The light streaming in through the windows at the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, NC on an afternoon in February 2007 blanketed all of us who packed the pews. It fell on me and the others around me like a silent blessing. We were there to commemorate and celebrate the life of Pauli Murray, the first African American woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest. We were there to remember the day, thirty years before, when the Rev. Dr. Murray became the first woman to celebrate the Eucharist in North Carolina, in that same little chapel.

That day back in 1977 was special because it was Murray's first celebration of the Eucharist, and because she had chosen the same chapel in which her grandmother, Cornelia Smith, had been baptized in 1854. Cornelia Smith, a slave, was brought to be baptized at the Chapel of the Cross by the woman who owned her. After the baptism, Cornelia was sent back up to the balcony where all the slaves sat, as far from the altar as you could be. Imagine being relegated to that balcony, having to look down on all the white people below. Imagine if Cornelia could have known at the time that her own granddaughter would one day preside at a service of Holy Eucharist in the same chapel.

Cornelia Smith's life, much of it spent in slavery, was filled with suffering. Her granddaughter Pauli Murray's life also was not easy. Murray's father was murdered when she was thirteen. She was denied admission to graduate school at UNC because of her race and denied admission to graduate studies at Harvard Law School because of her gender. Despite these setbacks, Murray managed through sheer force of will to graduate as one of five black students at Hunter College in New York. She graduated from Howard Law School as the only woman in her class and the top student in her class. She became an attorney, earned a doctorate from Yale, was a professor at Brandeis University, served on John F. Kennedy's Committee on Civil Rights, advised Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the Civil Rights movement, and, I suppose in her spare time, wrote poems and published books such as *Proud Shoes* and *Song in a Weary Throat*.

Then, at age sixty-two, she entered seminary. A few years later, she found herself at the altar of the Chapel of the Cross, reading the Gospel from the Bible her grandmother Cornelia had passed down to her, consecrating the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ and then serving it to the people, black and white, who filled and overflowed that space. She later said, "What I was trying to communicate as I administered the bread was a lovingness for each individual who received. I [moved slowly and] didn't care how long it took." Murray added, "It was given to me that day to be a symbol of healing.... All the strands of my life had come together.... Now I was empowered to minister the sacrament of One in whom there is no north or south, no black or white, no male or female, only the spirit of love and reconciliation."

Reconciliation and healing were much on the minds of those who attended the service for Pauli Murray in 2007. The Rt. Rev. Michael B. Curry, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, who is himself African American, was present. Presiding at the Eucharist was Katharine Jefferts Schori, the new Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. She herself had been reviled and excluded by some in the Anglican Communion because of her stance on full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the church and because she is a woman. From the very place where Pauli Murray had stood three decades earlier, Bishop Katharine said, "I know I stand here today only because she stood here before me. Her proud shoes carried many others down the road to freedom."



Courtney Reid-Eaton and Brett Cooke at Pauli Murray mural

As winter sunlight fell on the faces in the pews, the sense of blessing was almost tangible. Near the end, we rose to sing the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," which includes, "When through the deep waters I call thee to go, the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow; For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress." Discrimination persists, corroding our lives and causing terrible suffering. But at the same time, God can take our "troubles," as the hymn says, and through them, God can heal us, sanctify us, and bless us.

Cornelia Smith must have known it. Pauli Murray knew it. Bishop Katharine knows it—the truth of the good news, that God wants to be part of our suffering, wants to bless us and heal us. As Murray once wrote, "The spirit of love and reconciliation is drawing us all toward the goal of human wholeness." May we, each one of us, sense this spirit of healing and blessing and wholeness in this moment, and in all the moments of our lives to come.

From a sermon the Rev. Liz Dowling-Sendor preached, Feb. 11, 2007, Episcopal Church of the Advocate, Chapel Hill, NC. Liz is an Episcopal priest and Writer in Residence at RCWMS.



Face Up!—a mural project sponsored by Duke's Center for Documentary Studies—brought Brett Cooke to Durham in 2008 to create a dozen murals around town. Six of them depict Pauli Murray. Putting her image on the TROSA building across from the YMCA and on the old Durham Food Coop on Chapel Hill Street got people talking about this remarkable woman.

Murray was born November 20, 1911 and died July 1, 1985. After her mother died, four-year-old Pauli went to Durham, NC, to live with her maternal grandparents, the Fitzgeralds, and her mother's sisters, Pauline and Sally, in a house on what is now Carroll Street. Though born in Baltimore, she graduated from high school in Durham, and Durham claims her as a daughter.

Today, when anyone in Durham says "Pauli Murray," people come. Durham Public Library sponsored a panel about Pauli Murray last winter, and a crowd showed up on a miserable rainy afternoon. Local Episcopal churches sponsored a convocation in Murray's honor at St. Titus Episcopal Church in July, and so many people came that they ran out of seats. The same churches sponsored a discussion of Murray's *Proud Shoes* in August and sixty-five people came. To a book discussion in August!

People seem hungry to discuss the issues raised by this lawyer, scholar, poet, and priest and her tireless efforts on behalf of civil rights and women's rights. Murray was arrested in 1940 in Virginia for refusing to sit at the back of a bus. Later she researched laws on race in the South and published *States Laws on Race and Color*. She co-founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). Her story provides an opportunity to explore the complexity of our communities. With her multiple ancestries (African, European, and Native American), Murray insisted she was neither this nor that. She understood herself to be black *and* white, slave *and* free, male *and* female.

Several upcoming efforts will focus on Murray. The Duke Center for Human Rights created the Pauli Murray Project, directed by Barbara Lau (balau@duke.edu), to educate the community about Murray and promote the values for which she stood. For Murray's centennial next year, RCWMS will sponsor an art exhibit at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Durham. The Episcopal Diocese of NC nominated Murray for inclusion in Lesser Feasts and Fasts, their version of the list of saints.

That afternoon at the Chapel of the Cross, in 1977, the congregation sang, "In Christ there is no East or West, in him no South or North, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth." That's the kind of world Pauli Murray worked for all her life.

-Jeanette Stokes

Writing

by Jeanette Stokes

For the last eight years, the RCWMS writing programs have had their own support. These programs began with a gift from Nancy Peeler Keppel and continued after her death with support from her family's foundation, the Clifford A. and Lillian C. Peeler Family Foundation. These generous gifts have come to an end, but our writing programs will continue.

Our weeklong writing retreats continue to be popular. These weeks are a particular favorite of mine. Up to nine women can participate in the week. Each woman has her own room with a bed and a desk. Pelican House, the retreat house at Trinity Center where we stay, is silent during the day so people can write, rest, nap, or read. Meals are served in the dining hall where everyone is free to talk. In the evenings, we gather in the living room and read to one another and discuss our work. This is not a writing workshop. There aren't any assignments. Some people come to work on their own projects: poems, journals, articles, novels, memoirs, or whatever. Others come to start something or just to write about what they see and hear. There is no pressure to produce, though people find it a supportive environment in which to write. Join us for the week of September 20-27.

We also offer writing workshops in the Triangle. The fall got off to a good start with a writing workshop in late August led by Jane Penland Hoover. In her PenStrokes workshops, Jane teaches proprioceptive writing, a form of free writing that encourages a writer to continually ask, "What do I mean by that?"

Liz Dowling-Sendor will lead a four-part workshop on Wednesday evenings beginning in October on "Writing from Your Wounds." In January, writer Peggy Payne will lead a workshop that's not just for writers. In "Get Your Ganges On," Peggy will help people get clearer about what they really want in their writing or in their lives. In March, Carol Henderson will be back to lead another of her invigorating writing workshops. I'm still using the material I generated in Carol's last workshop earlier this year.

We are holding two events this fall to celebrate writers. The first gathering, on September 18, is a time for women in ministry to celebrate the publication of three books recently published by clergywomen: Margot Starbuck Hausmann's memoir, *The Girl in the Orange Dress*; Susan Dunlap's, *Caring Cultures: How Congregations Respond to the Sick*; and my memoir, *Hurricane Season: Living through a Broken Heart*.

The other event is the very first RCWMS Book Fair, to be held November 14 from 1:00-5:00 pm. Come to meet authors, hear readings, and buy holiday presents.

We have a section of our website dedicated to books, CDs, and DVDs produced by RCWMS and our friends. Go to our website and select "Publications" and then look for "Catalog." Go to www.rcwms.org.

Contest

2009 RCWMS ESSAY CONTEST

We are sponsoring our seventh 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 life. Write about your life, grace, how you experience God, or how you make it through the hard places. No sermons, please.

Prizes are \$300 for first place, \$200 for second, and \$100 for third. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in March 2010. The contest is made possible in part by a grant from the Clifford A. and Lillian C. Peeler Family Foundation.

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, 2009. No e-mail submissions are permitted. Not eligible: last year's winners, current RCWMS Board and staff. Winners will be notified by mail. Manuscripts won't be returned. Mail submissions to: RCWMS Essay Contest, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC 27701



from Bryant Holsenbeck video

RCWMS

The Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South is a 32-year-old nonprofit dedicated to weaving feminism and spirituality into a vision of justice for the world. In the past, RCWMS sponsored workshops, conferences, and retreats on women and religion, equal rights, economic justice, healthcare, and violence against women and children. The organization has mentored and encouraged young women, religious leaders, writers, and activists. In recent years we have developed programs about art, writing, creativity, and spirituality.

The RCWMS Board appreciates contributions of time, energy, money, and stock to the Resource Center. Your support allows us to continue offering our resources and programs. We are 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, contact RCWMS or see us on the web at www.rcwms.org.

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