

A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close & Carolyn Cowan

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NUMBER 4, SUMMER 2012

# SAGE-ING

WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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



A PUBLICATION OF THE OKANAGAN INSTITUTE

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Edited by Karen Close  
& Carolyn Cowan

NUMBER 4, SUMMER 2012  
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## SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

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### A PUBLICATION OF THE

## Okanagan Institute

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# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT EXACTLY IS SAGE-ING?

Karen Close

This fourth issue of our journal *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* completes our first season of publication. It is a time for celebration and reflection – indeed just like aging. Thanks to all of you who are reading and watching us grow, and to those of you who have enriched our journal with your contributions. We believe the caliber of this journal is a tribute to what can be accomplished by giving from the heart. Creative spirit is within each of us, waiting to awaken us to all we can be, individually and collectively. **Know yourself. Be yourself. Love yourself. Share yourself.**

In its simplest terms sage-ing is gaining wisdom and sharing it. Most importantly, regardless of one's chronological age, it is the individual's approach to the process of living one's life that makes the difference. In 1995, as humanity contemplated moving into the 21st century, many speculated about how to prepare for an unsure future, authors Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller wrote *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*, and introduced a seemingly new word into the English language. In fact, the idea of someone being a sage, a profoundly wise person, revered for their wisdom, judgement and experience has ancient roots. What this book and the word sage-ing did introduce is the idea that gaining wisdom is a process in which we are all engaged from the moment of birth onwards, just like aging. The point is to recognize the process and to honour it. The new vision I gained from the book is that authors Shalomi and Miller introduced the word sage-ing, as an action available to each of us. They were inviting a generation to look deeply into the experiences of their own lives and to turn within rather than turning to others for wisdom. That adjustment in perspective requires an enormous shift in thinking. The suggestion is that wisdom comes through personal reflection more than through the accumu-

lation of knowledge. **When consistent careful scrutiny is given to the moments of our lives, wisdom is gained. That's life's purpose.**

The journal *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* is an easel for displaying the efforts of all those who have taken up the challenge of seeking and feeling their own wisdom through creative expression. Unfortunately, sage-ing is not something you can learn from another; wisdom is only developed by personal reflection. Releasing into creative spirit is the act of allowing an intuitive expression of something new by responding to inner impulses. Humans have access to timeless sources of wisdom buried within, deep drives and memories of who we really are. By allowing ourselves to focus intently on what we are creating, there is a letting go of time and place – a departure from the ego into our own authentic being. Creativity has the ability to draw out and call into being what didn't exist in our lives before. Through creative expression we can help to reactivate the mind of the child within us, which knows what it knows with great simplicity and accuracy. **Have fun.**

One of the strengths that sages possess, regardless of age, is a willingness to be educated by all things. Curiosity leads them to learn from all they encounter. They do not judge people or situations. When one relaxes into just being, everything can nourish and stimulate. For those who embrace life as a sage-ing experience, things come to them from the world and from the events in their lives. By taking time and giving attention to creatively respond to what might at first seem ordinary and not deserving of notice, life ripens with significance and meaning. Creative expression is simply the giving of attention. This giving of ourselves fills us with enthusiasm and awe, and we feel compelled to share. **Create your life.**

We invite you to share the enthusiasm of the articles in this fourth issue and feel inspired to sage with creative spirit, grace and gratitude. **It feels great!**

# FROM OUR READERS



Kids love to paint



Table top painting

## THE CURRENCY OF SAGE-ING

*But neither money nor machines can create. They shuttle tokens of energy, but they do not transform. A civilization based on them puts people out of touch with their creative powers.* – Lewis Hyde, author *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World*

## A GIFT

Ed Bownes

On a Tuesday morning in mid April, a busload of kids from the Kelowna Christian School arrived at the Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna, BC. As part of their tour they found themselves very welcomed observers and participants in the weekly free art group called HeART Fit.

HeART Fit is simply a group of people who get together to experience joy and community with others who are keen to explore self expression by putting paint to paper or canvas. Coincidentally, it usually results in a wealth of shared wisdom and tasteful input and feedback by coordinator Karen Close and others – others who bring their life stories to color and shape during the best 3 hours anyone could ask for.

We were delighted to see the children’s level of unabashed interest and obvious eagerness to get right in there – to be active listeners, to ask questions and to be hands-on with paint and paper – to see what an exciting thing it is to see adults at play – just like them; some even painting with their fingers!

A couple of weeks later, making a presentation of the kid’s work to the Kelowna Christian School, I said:

“The piece of art being presented to your school today is an example of what came from a few of your students who took the opportunity to play with paint without any direction or expectation – creating beauty from the heart.

It may not be evident at first, but this work of art was done on the tissue paper we cover our tables with that usually gets rolled up at the end of the session and tossed into the garbage.

After the class left and we were getting ready to leave, we looked with great delight at what we all agree is a wonderful and lively gift that ‘just happened’.

We also agreed that we want your school to receive this collaborative art and hope you will share it with your students. Maybe this gesture will inspire future artists to emerge from an experience made possible through your



Presenting the painting

school programs. Thanks to your students for making our session even more fun.”

Here is the picture with me presenting the piece of art to the school and 4 of the kids who helped with it.

This is how it went. I met with the Elementary School principal Scott Campbell and Ms Hufnagel, their teacher who brought them into our group that day. They were blown away by a number of things: First, that the children were invited to take paint in hand and experience stroking. They remember the lady who had a big canvas on the easel who let them make their marks and I (Ms Hufnagel) remember someone saying how one of them was so comfortable making bold strokes and seemed at one with it all. Secondly, that this is an example of what their teachings are all about and how much they appreciated the gift... which will be hung in the school for all to see ... and will be written up in their school internal paper ... and that it recognized the talent of the children. And finally, that we would take the time and effort to do this that they thought they had struck gold when they received such a welcome into our room to experience and interact with us - this was of course not on their agenda that day as they were there to experience the pottery room.

Had fun! They love us. You could tell they were moved.

## MESSAGES FROM WITHIN

Louise Desaulniers (sent from her iphone)



Paintings speak when you let them

I want to share my recent heART 'unfoldment'. This painting was created last week in class.

Although the class facilitator, as well as the class participants, said it was done, I knew in my heart that it wasn't finished... And that I would know when the time was right to continue it...

Then today as I was cleaning house, I was dusting it and I got the message to finish it ...

At all times I allowed my hand to be guided by innate urgings ...

I like it! ... Feels abundant!



And this is what showed up!

I looked out the window at 6:00AM this beautiful morning thinking about what Awesome bit I would share with you and this is what was given.



## AWESOME

Ruby

Greetings to all you awesome people. Writing this is a new experience for me and I am Grateful.

Awesome is everywhere when I look for it and even when I don't.

Awe is what I am filled with when I see something that totally moves my spirit.

I love, love, love, hearts and I see them everywhere. Whenever I see a heart, it reminds me that there is an abundance of Love. I just have to look.

I see hearts in everything and everywhere. In rocks, food, the sky, on the ground, in trees on animal coats and places that I could have never imagined. I just have to look.

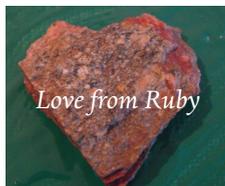
Every time I get to look at this beautiful, Awesome sight I am filled with Awe.

This is God's handiwork and I believe how we connect.

I hope your day is full of Awesome and that you see Love wherever you go.

I hope you look for and see Awesome in yourself and look for and see the Awesome in everyone you meet.

Namaste (the awesome in me looks for and sees the awesome in you)



# THE ART OF CREATING A BEAUTIFUL DAY

**Sandy McNolty**

As I was driving home from Clearwater last week, after attending my father in law's funeral, I suddenly became very aware of my surroundings. I noticed the birds flying into the bright blue horizon, the sun glistening on the tiny ponds and lakes, the grass and trees blowing in the wind and flowers beginning to bud and bloom. As I watched all of nature and how it is constantly changing and creating itself, I felt so intimately connected to it all. I felt so alive.

I began to notice with such an intense awareness how my thoughts and emotions were actually a part of this mysterious creation. I also noticed that when I chose to think of memories that made me sad I would sink into the sadness and start to get lost in it. But then when I decided to think of something that brought a smile to my face, I felt alive and grateful for the warm feeling. It was then that I really felt at the deepest level of my being - that I was the master of creating my day. I immediately gave myself permission to create the most enjoyable day.

Previously I had been thinking about all I had to do when I got home; worrying about this and fretting about that. I was thinking of the way my father-in-law looked as he was dying. I was getting a headache and began feeling tightness in my chest. In that moment I thought to myself, "Wait a minute, I am alive and I want to celebrate that right now, in this moment".

Once I decided to create a beautiful day, I pulled over to the side of the road by a small sparkling lake. I walked slowly down the path to the lake and sat down on an old tree trunk. I felt so good as I observed the ducks enjoying their swim, smelled the grass and plants and felt the wind and sun on my skin. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath as I stretched and instantly felt so present and content.

When I was back in the car I put on Roy Orbison, one of my favorite artists. As I sang along, I felt like Roy and I were actually together on this road trip. I even recall saying out loud, "I love you Roy, thank you for creating these songs so we could enjoy this time together". I felt like a child again; so full of innocence, imagination and lightheartedness.

When I saw Lake Okanagan after 2 weeks of being away it was like seeing it for the first time! What a lovely sight. Again I said out loud, "I am so lucky to live in this amazing valley". I smiled and continued singing my duet with Roy.

**As I watched all of nature and how it is constantly changing and creating itself, I felt so intimately connected to it all. I felt so alive.**

**It is in the present moment that we can feel the creative life force pulsing through our bodies. This life force is the canvas, our thoughts are the paint, and our actions become the painting.**



When I arrived home I was so excited to be in familiar surroundings, I forgot all about what I had to do and decided to go for a walk in the greenway. As I walked along Mission Creek, I again felt so connected to everything, including all the other people who were also creating their own days. We all have the ability and power to create any type of day we like, just like we have the choice to create any type of painting, poem, song or garden. This is something that I think we all forget a great deal of the time.

When we let ourselves get lost in our negative thoughts of our past or our future we become blind to our true inner wisdom and creativity. It is in the present moment that we can feel the creative life force pulsing through our bodies. This life force is the canvas, our thoughts are the paint, and our actions become the painting. If we don't like the painting that we've created we have the ability to paint over it or start a new one.

On that note, I say, "Go ahead, create yourself a beautiful day"!

# RETROSPECTIVE MOTHER DAUGHTER

## A WOMAN'S JOURNEY

**Hélène Letnick**  
introduction by **Karen Close**



Thérèse Laliberté and Hélène Letnick

Yesterday, I spent the afternoon with a woman in love with sage-ing. She greeted me with a generous smile and a huge hug. We both felt a shift of knowing as she led me into her story, and through her art exhibition *Retrospective Mother Daughter: A Woman's Journey*.

Hélène Letnick's mother, Thérèse Laliberté is retreating into Alzheimer's, but knowingly Hélène describes how she chose to accept her eighty-six year old mother's retreat by creatively celebrating all she has been. The exhibition of works begins in 1934 with samples of the early coloured pencil drawings that commenced Thérèse's Laliberté's creative journey.

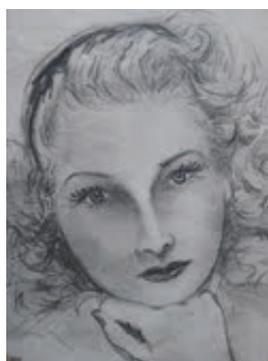
Fifty-five works chronicle the story of Thérèse – how she enriched her life through her art and the gift she has given her daughter. As Hélène immersed herself into appreciation of her mother's artistic evolution, she felt the pulse of her own inheritance. However, this story is more than a daughter learning to paint from her mother. Hélène remembers vividly what drew her to painting. It was only a few years before her mother's withdrawal into Alzheimer's. As the exhibition moves forward into Hélène's own most recent bold thick acrylic panels, the viewer comes alive with awareness. What Hélène has received from Thérèse Laliberté is the gift of liberation to creatively discover her own being. Hélène feels the poignancy and the immensity. This is a true story of sage-ing. As you let it settle into your being, you feel grace, gratitude and eagerness for the next moment to unfold. The sensation is like blowing bubbles.

We evolve into the spiritual beings that we are when we move into the realisation that life is speaking in every moment of experience. In this, and the upcoming issues of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*, Hélène Letnick will relate her journey as it began, and continues to unfold.

\*\*\*\*

I remember when I heard the call to create. It was December 2006. My husband, Norm, and I had gone to see *Dawn: Sketches by the Group of Seven* at the Kelowna Art Gallery.

We were discussing something in French when a friendly lady approached us. She had moved to Kelowna from Ontario about a year prior and was so happy to hear people speaking in French. We started chatting, went each our own ways, bumped into each other again, and then parted one more time. On our third encounter around the room, we were in front of an A.Y. Jackson. At that point I sighed and said, "Oh, I wish I could paint something like that, but I have no clue where to start." That is when Linda Lovisa (I had found out her name by then) told me, "Well, if you want, I can help you."



Portrait 1948, Thérèse Laliberté



Winter Nostalgia, Thérèse Laliberté



Landscape from my childhood, Thérèse Laliberté



Quebec Village Scene, Thérèse Laliberté



The Fisgard Lighthouse, Hélène Letnick



Emerald Lake, Hélène Letnick

I had a desire, a need to fill something inside of me. I had sent it out there and Linda provided me with the opportunity to discover it. I started to explore my artistic soul.

My mother had been an artist all her life. She said she was born with a pencil in her hand. As a child I don't remember being particularly artistic. As a teenager I wrote incessantly - prose and poetry. That was my artistic outlet. Then it was university, getting married, having children. I never found the time except perhaps for a few faux-finish walls that I painted in my home. I remember joking, "My mother paints canvasses; I paint walls." - never knowing that one day I would paint canvasses too. My mother always said I had it inside of me. I just had to find it.

I recall the excitement I felt when I realized I could draw a tree! It was January 2007 and under the guidance of Linda Lovisa, I started to become more adventurous. I also took a few classes at Kelowna Art Gallery, but when I started an acrylic class with Linda, I fell in love. I knew I had found my medium!

\*\*\*\*

I moved west in 1981 and 22 years later, after my father passed away, my mother moved to Kelowna. It was so nice to be physically close to her again and she was getting to know her grand-children. She kept saying these were the best years of her life. In 2010, mom was officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease - a disease that is slowly taking away her independence, and making her lose control of her life. It is scary.

In January 2011, I needed to prepare mom's condo in order to sell it. Hours upon hours, sitting on her living room floor, I discover my mother's history through her art, preciously preserved in brown paper bundles. This young girl, whose passion is to draw, expresses on paper the joys and sorrows of her times. It is a journey of eighty-six years. The hardships of my mother's life have left their marks, but art is still a part of her life because now it is a part of mine I want to share with her.

The visit to the Group of Seven exhibit was the catalyst urging me to express my desire to paint. Through my paintings I have been able to connect with my mother in a very special way. When she looks at a painting she becomes alive and her eyes sparkle. You can't take art out of an artist! By putting together Retrospective Mother Daughter, I was able to celebrate the artistic essence of my mother. That essence will always be at her core.

When I began to assemble my mother's works, I realized that what we create reflects who we are. My mother never liked clutter; life was organized. Her drawings and paintings exude details.

There was a softness and gentleness about my mother, but she was a loner.

There was a sad side of hers that I could not understand. Art was her friend. It brought her comfort. Her palette and choices of subjects reflect that state of mind I think. As for me, the more I paint the more I dig into my inner passion. There is a side of me that enjoys realistic painting - probably my



French Beach, Vancouver Island, Hélène Letnick



A Garden of Memories, Hélène Letnick



Expression, Hélène Letnick



Joy, Hélène Letnick

mother's influence here. It is a joyful experience for me when I paint this way.

But more and more often, my soul wants to soar. I paint with my emotions. This is why my painting subjects are so varied, as they depend on what I have inside of me that particular day. Each painting has its own heartbeat because I put my whole self in it. I love textures and bold colours. If once in a while I paint something softer or more subdued, it is because that's how I felt that day.

This is the beauty of art, of being creative. It is not stagnant but changes according to our emotions and the moments we are experiencing. When a painting bursts with emotional energy, I believe it touches people's souls. I also believe that, at one point or another, a painting will find its way into the hands of the person it was created for.

Painting is passion; it is like riding a wave. You feel transported; it is exhilarating. There is some kind of direction but you're never quite sure where you're going to end up. It is an adventure.

Retrospective Mother Daughter seems to have been the fertile soil for new growth. It has touched so many people in a way I would have never thought possible. It has been the catalyst for personal soul searching, for a journey of discovery of where I come from and what my roots are.

There is a desire to connect or should I say to reconnect. There is a desire to affect the world in a positive way, one painting at a time.

The torch has been passed ... the story continues.



Above: Synchronicity, Hélène Letnick



Right: Acceptance, Hélène Letnick

# COLLABORATIVE PAINTING BONDS FRIENDSHIP

**Tara Davies**  
**Pieter Hoogendoorn**



Perhaps my first easel

Years ago in my parent's backyard I remember painting topless with a plastic tablecloth over the fence to protect it from the youthful exuberance of brush strokes and mark making ...

In my school years I recall art acknowledgments, and numerous art electives ... likely to avoid any academics. Following my art adolescence into early adulthood, I schooled in Commercial, Fine and Graphic Arts, worked in an art store, engaged in many mediums: pen and ink, oil, water media, acrylics, and sold/showed artworks from my basement studio.

At age 26 I met my birth mom, apparently art does flow thru my veins; it was then I realized I was a third generation oil painter. Genetics are sooo cool.

Not so much topless, I still paint 2-3 times a week; in my home, at the Rotary Centre for the Arts, Kelowna, BC since 2009, and painting murals in private residences.

In 2008 I was diagnosed with cancer and engaged in aggressive medical treatments. People asked, "Now that you're off work, are you painting lots?" In thought, I replied, "I don't have anything beautiful inside to paint." Keeping my chin up, hairless from chemo, scared and struggling for some control in my health, I turned to expressionism. It was a style I was unaware I had painted for years. Emotional attachments to colour and reading about therapeutic arts filled my being. I had the life changing good fortune to meet Karen Close (and other fabulous professionals) through Arts and Health/ Okanagan Institute. Karen facilitates and started a painting group called heART Fit. Painting for years on my own and for others, I now experience the benefits of an art community. Coupled with my awareness of healing, I really started to look at and feel my paintings with new understanding and intention. Heightened emotions took my works from joy to tears. Surrounded by a lovely, supportive group of people, we review our work weekly, watch progress and spot the positives at the end of every Tuesday art session. I would highly recommend this art journey for anyone 'healing' emotionally, physically or just to add to your art journey.

And now for my most recent art experience:

This spring I had a dear friend visit from the Netherlands, a soapstone sculptor with limited painting experience. We bought two canvases to paint as one, and then separate into halves. One would stay in Canada and the other



22. Another Way To Be Friends

**Sharing the same palette and painting with our fingers, in harmony on the same canvas, led to a sharing - a giving up to the process.**

to return to the Netherlands with Pieter. I was truly unaware of the exhilarating outcome of just painting freely. I have done commissions which are geared to have a pleasing outcome, custom painted to suit and meet the hopes or expectations of a client.

We started one Tuesday at he ART Fit; anxieties soon blossomed as we switched from work to work, but each painting separately. We were not truly painting collaboratively, in communion with each other. We took our works home, reviewed them with another visiting Dutch artist friend, and critiqued the two unfinished works. The next Tuesday we returned to the group with the same two canvases and worked on each together. Sharing the same palette and painting with our fingers, in harmony on the same canvas, led to a sharing - a giving up to the process.

There was no controlling or leading from either of us. We were freed from the outside world of relationships, friendships, dominant personalities or level of experience. Pieter and I reviewed our final two pieces poised next to each other with the group. We had not painted them side by side but they seemed to overlap along a combined edge. Lots of colour and great memories of fun from his four week stay here in Canada.

Time well spent. I would see this process being beneficial for team building, family/partners and or close friendships.

### **Peet's perspective:**

My friend Tara she had an idea, when I visited her on my holiday - to paint two equal canvases with our hands!

It sounded great. For me, the night before we practiced on paper with stamps at her house; it was new, strange. My former experience with drawing and painting were not that much; I try, for example, to draw/paint a tree. I was not impressed with the result.

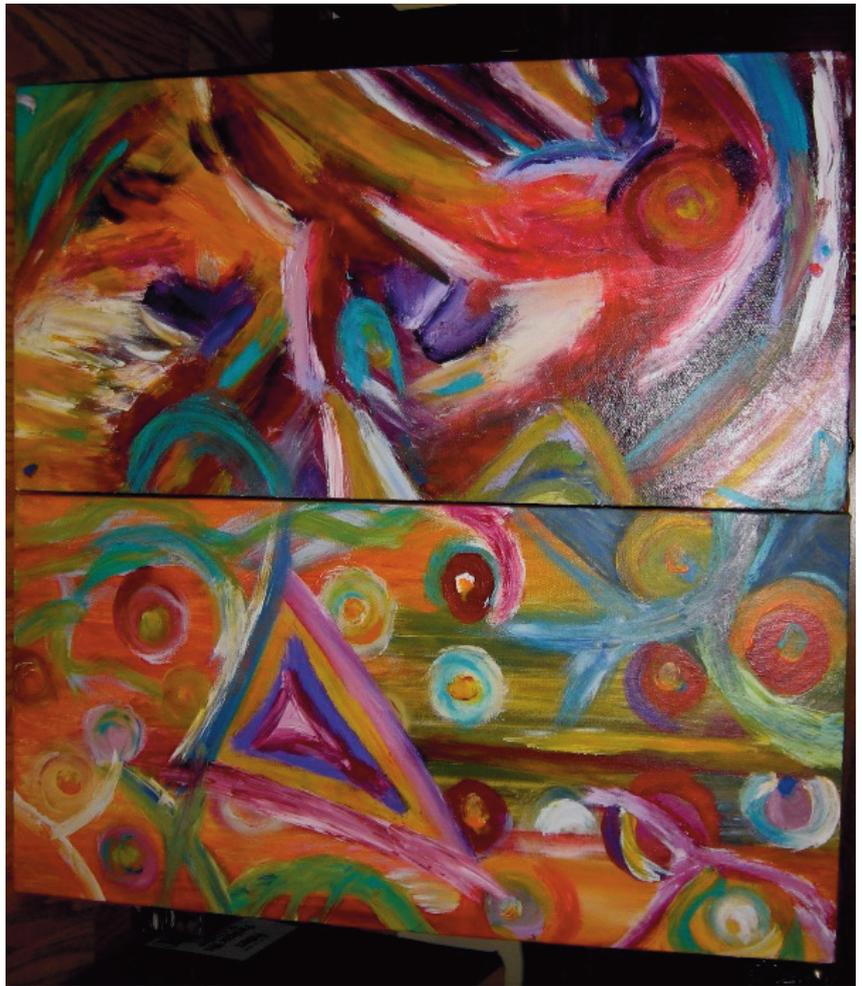
At the RCA we started both on a different canvas, wearing gloves and I was doodling with the colours to try to make a colour which I had in mind. This required real letting go - asking Tara how to make a colour, translate from Dutch to English and then trying to get there, looking to Tara, to the other persons in the room. Why? I was comparing and worrying, "did I do well enough? Peter stop. Let it go. Free yourself. (I was talking to myself). It's my first time."

After a while we switched canvases. This was the hardest moment for me - not to leave my own canvas, but to start to work on the canvas where Tara had worked. I tried to start by mixing a colour. Her work was in my eyes already done; the painting was finished and ready to go on the wall. I feared

Tara and Peet's Collaborative Painting

**I spoke with Tara about this, we decided that it would be better that we paint together on the same canvas and that was much better for me I did my thing and Tara did hers.**

**The next time we did it the same together one painting and it becomes more fun, fun!**



that I would mash it up, ruin it. I tried to relax. Oh, I saw when I entered the room that a woman was working with tape on her painting. Ok, I will try that too.

So I made a triangle on the canvas, but it was not comfy.

I spoke with Tara about this, we decided that it would be better that we paint together on the same canvas and that was much better for me I did my thing and Tara did hers.

The next time we did it the same together one painting and it becomes more fun, fun!

After we finished both paintings, Karen asked me if I had something to share with the group about my experience. What I have written above is what I told the group.

Finally when I was back in Tara's car, I break down in tears, so touched by the reactions of the people of heART Fit...

It was incredible. Thanks sweet people.

Love, Peet

# NURTURING CREATIVITY

## Karen Close



My Project



I Love My Family

I love learning from my grandchildren. You have met my oldest granddaughter in previous issues. She and I began painting as she explored her colourful food on a surface I put on her highchair tray (1st issue). She was three in February, and now has a baby brother born this February. It's hard to share the spotlight, but she is very loving and creative. How much thinking about her family absorbs her thoughts was made clear to me as we sat on the patio to enjoy the sun early in the spring. I had noticed she was busy, but honestly, I was enjoying the relaxation when she looked up and said, "Do you like my project?"

"Tell me about it," I answered.

I almost wept as I heard the simple beauty and truth in her explanation. She had very carefully chosen and arranged six leaves and a small blossom to express her world. "This is us. There is Mommy and Daddy looking after baby brother and me on that side and then you and Pappars on the other side. The flower is because we are beautiful."

My heart swells. She knows what is important and deeply feels a connection to the inner and outer worlds that are forming her. I have spent my life exploring my own and others' creativity, yet each time I am with my grandchildren they jolt me into greater awareness. This three year old's parents are both in the tech industry in Silicon Valley. In seeking daycare, they and many others in that community, have turned to the theories of Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf Schools. The best overall statement on what is unique about Steiner education is to be found in its statement of intent:

*"Our highest endeavour must be to develop individuals who are able out of their own initiative to impart purpose and direction to their lives".* Rudolf Steiner

In this community of engineers designing our future, enrolment in Waldorf preschool is at capacity. These schools began in Germany in 1919. Steiner believed that an education system should lead children to a realisation of the true connections between themselves and their natural environment. I look at my granddaughter's project and marvel at her genuine simple understanding of inter-connection and love. At the age of three she knows what is important to her and is eager to explore that inner world. She is proud of herself and is able to find joy simply by exploring her environment. She is eager to share. These are important qualities.

Almost a century ago, led by faith in his own observations and intuition, it seems Steiner realised what current brain research is now showing. He knew that the educational process must stimulate both the left and right sides



**I am eager to grow with my grand children through creative play where I learn from them how to embrace every moment as an opportunity for learning.**

of the brain. Most importantly, Steiner believed in educating a human being with a reverence for life. Activities are intended to strengthen the child's sense of self by bringing awareness to differentiation, will, thinking, feeling, movement - and even breathing. In Steiner's curriculum, science is taught with a concern for human values. He views art as a route that helps reveal nature's secrets and the individual's connection to all that is. Steiner advised against a merely intellectual school day. He firmly believed in the seriousness of play. When ready, students document their ideas by writing and drawing in special notebooks. Children learn early that forming and expressing their thoughts is valued and as a result they feel valued. My granddaughter found a table top to be her special notebook.

In Steiner's ideas I found direction for how I want to grandparent. I am eager to grow with my grand children through creative play where I learn from them how to embrace every moment as an opportunity for learning. I spent a day at preschool with my granddaughter and gained insight into how I can make our together times richer for both of us by turning what could be chores into play.

Each day my granddaughter brings home a loaf of bread that she has made.

Some loaves she knowingly concedes are "not so good today", but still she contributes her bread to the dinner table. She is learning we can't always be perfect, but we should always show generosity and acceptance.

Working in the garden turns into an adventure in hunting and gathering. The bounty then turns into marvellous make-believe activities. Carefully chosen rocks, sticks and roots are invitations for imaginative transformation into stories. I watched in the classroom as the teachers and the children took turns adding new details in an ever changing narrative. This activity teaches many skills. Teachers used singing songs to move the children through the routines of the day; lyrics are easy and repetitive. It is joyful to listen and watch as they join together in voice and action. Making up your own songs together is the most fun.

Rudolf Steiner's philosophy which he calls Anthroposophy is rooted in the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, and Thomas Aquinas, the early sages. At the core is a belief in *head*, *heart* and *hands* as integral to learning. Steiner thought that schools should cater to the needs of the child rather than the demands of the government or economic forces.

*The need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility – these are the three forces which are the very nerve of education.*" Rudolf Steiner

These are the three forces I want for my grand children, and indeed all children.

# PARKINSON'S DEMANDS A CREATIVE RESPONSE

**Andrea Farrell**

## **Part One : Answering the Call to Create**

This morning I woke to the early chatter of birds.

Laying in bed with closed eyes, listening to them, I could smell frying corn gently wafting in through my open windows. Tortillas. Memories from traveling in Mexico, a beautiful, sensual memory of the delights of waking to a new day, in that spiritual moment just as the soul of the town is readying itself for life. I want to create a poem about the joy I feel and capture those smells coming from the kitchens. I heard the call to create loud and clear. Poetry - another adventure yet to explore!

For too many years, I didn't listen to my inner urges. Suddenly my whole world was turned upside down with my diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. I heard the call to create shouting. I realized I needed to express myself in every way I could discover, not only so others might hear me, but so that I could hear myself. I'm realizing the more I listen, the more I become attuned and the more I want to express. In answering the call to write, form is given to meaning as you sculpt with words, and shape is given to how we think about the world. We find more of a framework in which to see ourselves as part of the web of life.

For anyone to write, fostering silence and solitude is crucial. You must nurture these in the midst of the hectic world we live in. Not only do you need to reduce external noise or find ways to escape others, but also to create a state in which your inner voices are stilled and you stand alone with the Mystery. Writing a journal makes me think about what's important because with writing comes an amazing gift of wisdom. In answering the call to create one develops the internal resources needed to keep pushing forward: Motivation! Confidence! Persistence! All are required or you'll slowly burn out. I'm learning how to use my energy, to screen out external distractions and internal noise, and to embrace solitude. Living with an incurable progressive neurological disease certainly requires an attitude that is teaching me how to better create my life. If we ignore the call to create, I believe we deny the healing of ourselves.

Parkinson's disease is a quirky partner and fiendishly creative. It reshapes personalities, habits and even physical characteristics. It demands a creative

**Living with an incurable progressive neurological disease certainly requires an attitude that is teaching me how to better create my life.**



As I Look Across The Room At HeART Fit



Tribute to Jackson Pollock

response as you rethink and rebuild your life as it is now. Because Parkinson's is always on the move, staying alert for new ways to cope is a must. Whether it be the simple act of walking or the complexity of the relationship with your partner, you have to rethink how life can be approached when old strategies lose their use. Learning to be creative is much like learning to live with Parkinson's – you build slowly. Progress isn't measured in the number of poems describing the mouth-watering smell of corn tortillas. What is more important is the process of building meaning from the pile of old bones left in the wake of loss and bereavement. I'm discovering being creative is hard work that requires a whole different approach.

## Part Two: The Call To Play.

During my years as a Nurse educator, I was caught up in my addiction to perfection and the 'workaholism' it produced. I took my job seriously until I got sick. Now on my wonderful Tuesday mornings at heART Fit I can enjoy playing. Whether I'm writing, painting, drawing or taking pictures, creating always puts me in a pain-free zone. I understand creating taps into a whole different pathway to one's brain. Recent brain research describes The Gate Control Theory which is what the Lamaze method of birthing is based on. Apparently, the brain can only accept one thing at a time. When I'm creating, joy, rather than the pain messages of Parkinson's, gets through first and this joy keeps on allowing relaxation as long as I can stay in that relaxed place in my head.

Tuesday mornings at heART Fit encourages my joy to bubble up and put a smile on my face; I find so much joy from just being in the room with people who share and amplify this positive play place. By giving ourselves permission to play with the joyful abandon of childhood, we can continue to nurture serendipity, wonder and surprise once again as an important part of our lives.

My favorite group of painters is the abstract expressionists. They were based in New York after the Second World War. These painters turned against conventional definitions and techniques that the European artists clung to. They tried to broaden their artistic process to express what Jung called 'the collective unconscious'. To create, they turned inward. Jackson Pollock is the artist most often associated with this group and the first of whom I studied.

This painting is my tribute to his attempting to use his creative expression as a weapon in the struggle to maintain humanity in the midst of the world's increasing insanity. His content, like mine in this work, is intended to be grasped intuitively by each viewer, in a state free from structured thinking. It's a reflection of how it feels to me to have my world so displaced from my old one that I'm not sure if I'm the crazy person or the rest of the world is, well, nuts!

I can't tell you how much fun I had 'letting it all hang out!' I worked on this for two whole nights, locked alone in my garage, blessedly naked. My

canvas was on the floor and I used my whole body in swirling gestures as I worked to splatter, drip and fling paint onto the canvas. (you need to use cans of house paint for this - tubes don't work.) It was without a doubt, one of the most joyful times of my life. The canvas was so close to me on the floor that I could move freely and spontaneously along its edge or across it - I could work from all four sides easily, walk around it and internally be in the painting itself. As I remember this tremendous joy, I'm left questioning why I don't do this more often.

Creating is mindfulness in action; the little push that gets things moving is the thrill of discovery. As humans, we are all fascinated by new ideas and manage to get totally into the novelty with the excitement that occurs when we're able to grasp something in a new light. To me, that's why my heART Fit mornings are so important- they give me that little push in the right direction. They call me to play.

**By giving ourselves permission to play with the joyful abandon of childhood, we can continue to nurture serendipity, wonder and surprise once again as an important part of our lives.**

# THEATRE IS A PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

## Tracy Ross

*“Creative expression is simply the giving of attention. This giving of ourselves fills us with enthusiasm and awe, and we feel compelled to share”. Some of us are born infused with that enthusiasm for life’s moments and so it enriches how we live our lives. Some of us become sages at an early age. When I first spoke with Tracy Ross I felt her enthusiasm and urged her to share her story of creating and directing Bumpershoot Theatre in Kelowna. – Karen Close*



On Stage at Bumpershoot



Dooby Dooby Moo

It’s 12:30 a.m. and the phone rings. I can see that it is one of my kids calling and so I answer, surprisingly I was asleep, not always true for me at this time of night. She is out with friends and things aren’t going quite as planned, what should she do?

A simple introduction to a storyline, but it has all of the elements of a good start to a play. It would then unfold.

The play is a process of discovery. The audience witnesses the characters as they move through the telling of a story. Often a problem is presented and a story, a play is the opportunity to work to change the circumstance of that problem. The characters are introduced to challenges within their environment, or by another character, or even possibly from within themselves. As these challenges are discovered the character is forced to respond, to react, and possibly (and maybe hopefully) to change.

It is this process that becomes interesting for the audience to watch and also for the actor to play. The actor places his or herself in the shoes of the character and must, in order to be believable, understand why the character would do what they do and why that character has made that particular set of choices.

Making choices is the actor’s job too - to work within the guidance that the playwright has given, the information in the dialogue or the action and to honour the story that the writer has intended to communicate. For each kind of artist, there is always a place to begin. For the painter there has to be the first brush stroke, the writer-first words, the musician the first note. There is always a place to begin. The actor begins first by taking a risk. Within these beginnings there is attention. As Arthur Miller wrote “Attention must be paid”.

I am continually amazed at this process - the craft and the work required to hone it. It is a process of discovery, magically not just for the character that one plays, and the story that is told, but also for the actor.



31. It shows to me that as we create these grand stories, plays, we also create community.

**In acting, you are your own tool, the method for the delivery of the art form.**

Almost 5 years ago, I founded a Children's Theatre. I believe profoundly in the impact that this kind of exploration and attention can have in someone's life. That it has had, and continues to have in mine. Art is a process of self-discovery and exploration; acting has provided me with a gift; it has taught me to more acutely pay attention.

In acting, you are your own tool, the method for the delivery of the art form. In order to express it honestly, there must be an understanding of who you are. You then get to translate yourself and your experiences into those of the characters you play and the stories you get to tell.

In this lies a great opportunity for the actor - the opportunity to view the world from a different person's point of view. In this practice, the exploration of the actor's craft, we are artists cultivating and developing empathy. Both an understanding of who we are, how we fit into the world, and how we can, by understanding one another, become citizens that choose to see the world from more than one perspective is developed. This perspective invites us to exercise compassion.

Yes, 5 years ago I founded a Children's Theatre, for I love the art of telling wonderful stories, and the chance to express myself creatively. I desire the chance to take risks that reveal my spirit and challenge my vulnerabilities. I aspire to become better each time I do the work and to sharpen my craft. I love all of these things. Even more so, however, I am passionate about how participating in these creative experiences has the power to liberate the mind,

**I am fortunate in living through my passion, that I am able to use theatre as a vehicle for introducing young people to themselves.**

and spirit and intellect. Most importantly, by providing an opportunity for young people to experience these things as they develop, I know they will gain a clearer understanding of who they are, how they fit into the world, and more so, how they want to continue to express who they are within that world.

We have many programs at Bumbershoot, and each is there to provide opportunities to our community, young and old, to express themselves. Our theme for this season is “Express Yourself”. I am excited about the work that we do, and that I am fortunate in living through my passion, that I am able to use theatre as a vehicle for introducing young people to themselves.

The acting craft in theatre teaches many wonderful life skills: creating relationship, taking risks, developing empathy, compassion, confidence, public speaking skills, and learning to make choices. Acting teaches you to pay attention. I value and believe in that; I believe in applying this craftsmanship to one’s everyday living and to being artful as you create the life you want to lead.

Recently, I took a group of young people to a drama festival and the adjudicator commented after their performance that what he witnessed on stage was “fearlessness”; his comment was referring to the level of commitment that they brought to the stage and the telling of this particular story. To me, it was one of the highest compliments that they could have received.

It’s 12:30 AM and the phone rings. I can see that it is one of my kids calling, and so I answer. This phone call is one of the highest compliments I can receive for my work. The girl at the end of the phone, is not my own daughter (who is still only 5), but one of the young girls that I work with in the theatre, and this is a true story. She is wondering what to do? Why do I perceive this as a compliment to me?

There is always a place to begin. Begin by paying attention. Attention to the art that is your life.

*Bumbershoot Children’s Theatre is a registered Charity that is dedicated to introducing children, as young as three, and youth to the incomparable magic of theatre. The aim is to stimulate and liberate the imagination, the intellect and the spirit through creative theatre experiences and to promote theatre as an integral part of the learning process. Tracy Ross is the founder and Artistic Director for Bumbershoot Children’s Theatre. For more information [www.bumbershoottheatre.com](http://www.bumbershoottheatre.com)*

# CREATING SOUL CONNECTION

**Ruth Bieber**



The table is set for an evening of intimate conversation with human books.

**Moore claims, that the most loving act we can give to another, is that of being interested in what that other person is saying; even if initially we aren't really interested!**

We have all had the experience of being a part of a discussion, which ultimately turned out to be less than “a discussion!” The phrase, “gift of the gab,” is one which sometimes has more gab than gift. Alternatively, there are those people, who can be described as perpetual listeners, which initially might feel inviting to the speaker, but over time that too can lose its appeal. Then there are those truly gifted people, who possess a genuine ability to communicate artfully. The art of communication is one which can be learned, and it is doubtful, that anyone comes by it naturally. Consider the research, which reveals, that the number one human fear, is the fear of public speaking. On the other hand, the act of active listening seems to be a dying art all together! Thomas Moore in his book, *The Soul of Sex*, speaks of a wonderful concept, which relates to the idea of interest. Moore claims, that the most loving act we can give to another, is that of being interested in what that other person is saying; even if initially we aren't really interested! In other words, when we really care about another person, we can choose interest in what they are saying. Again, it is very likely this won't happen overnight, but where the desire exists, over time the outcome can be favourable.

There are many opportunities available to us to improve our communication skills, but the Human Library is one of the most creative. I had the pleasure of being a book in the first Human Library held in Kamloops, British Columbia this past November, 2011. What is a Human Library?

Just like at the public library, there are books to choose from, but the difference at the Human Library is that the books are human books—people from the community who have agreed to share their life experiences with anyone who would like to “read” them.

The general public is welcome to attend and sign up to borrow books for 20-minute sessions. The atmosphere is casual and friendly and participants depart feeling like they have been included in a very genuine, human experience.

The evening I was a book, the venue was arranged such that each table hosting a human book, had a mock book on it with the name of the human book to be read. The human books were as diverse as the people who came to read. Biographies of the human books had been published on the human library website, as well as in the local paper earlier that week, so readers had a chance to preview. What makes a good book?

We are all books. Each life contains some measure of romance, adventure, family drama, mystery, comedy and tragedy— that's the nature of the human experience. We may have childhoods that are difficult or joyful,



Smorgasbord Deli owner Anita Strong holds a copy of her catalogue page in the Human Library. She was a book at the January library evening. Strong is chair of the Kamloops Chapter of the Council of Canadians, which sponsors the Human Library project.



Readers Margaret Jones (left) and Enid Damer (centre) listen with rapt attention to human book Gary Neilsen at a recent Human Library evening at the Smorgasbord Deli.

(Thanks to Lissa Millar for her photographs)

jobs that are dull or interesting, absorbing hobbies, complicated relationships, fascinating travel experiences, or we, or someone we love, may have encountered medical or psychological problems.

I happened to be a woman of a certain age, with a sight impairment, who has traveled the world, and is passionate about the arts and creative expression. The readers, who came to “read me,” possessed a variety of communication styles. All were already interested, which was a fabulous first step! Others came out of a genuine curiosity about the process, but over all I noticed, that many of the readers were also interesting people themselves eager to share their own stories.

What makes a good reader?

People who come to read the human books should read the biographies of the human books that will be featured that evening. Printed copies are available at the venue itself on the night of the event and are also posted on the website: [www.lookkamloops.ca/human\\_library.htm](http://www.lookkamloops.ca/human_library.htm). It doesn't hurt to have a sense of what interests you about their experiences and a few questions in mind.

It goes without saying that we should be respectful of the books and listen rather than divert the conversation to our own lives.

The heart of the human library can be summed up in a single vernacular; don't judge a book by its cover.

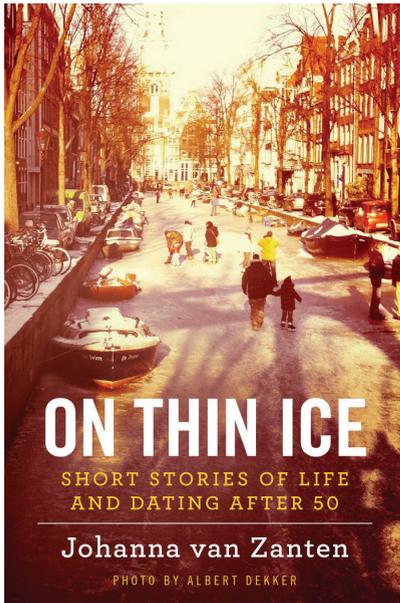
It's an oldie, but a goodie — because it's true. As we go through our daily lives, we make all sorts of prejudgments about the people we encounter. Just by looking at them, we make assumptions based on visible characteristics such as racial features, age, gender, style of dress, occupation and the persona and attitude people project. Most of the time, our assumptions are neither confirmed nor denied. We go on with our lives and never know what triumphs and failures that person has experienced. That old lady may be a widow who nursed her husband through terminal cancer. The friendly clerk at the hardware store may have gone to the Olympics with the Canadian fencing team. The Central American lady at the corner store may have fled violent revolution in her home country.

Repeat events such as the Human Library will bridge communication and bring us together as a single humanity. I highly recommend this process to any community, and wish to thank Lissa Millar for her write-up on the Human Library website, which I used liberally in this article. Also, thanks to Anita and Dalton Strong, owners of the Smorgasbord Café In Kamloops, who initiated this event in Canada, first held in Denmark in the year 2000. For further details, regarding these two inaugural events, again see the website.

Finally consider attending the Human Library reunion Saturday, September 15th at the Kamloops Farmer's Market.

# BIRTH OF A BOOK

## Johanna van Zanten



Have you ever had a dream of wanting to write that book that's in you—deep, deep down? Well, I did and I have. Not that it all came easy. No, it's a whole lot of work getting a book published. It is much like the path of a dung beetle that crawls up a hill—backwards—to push that ball of dung a few times bigger than its own body. The beetle pushes the dung over a distance that's more like a kilometre in that bug's world—to eat the ball at its leisure or to inject its semen or eggs in. When the scarab happens to lose hold of the ball, it has to start again, back from where the ball of shit rolled down to, if it had traveled uphill. By the way, the ancient Egyptians believed that life came from those dung balls by the male injecting its semen into it, and self-propagating that way without females. They revered the scarab; its cycle of dung rolling was a metaphor for the sun moving through the sky in daytime and at night through the underworld.

I always thought that to be able to write a decent book, one had to have something to write about, so I waited, and waited, until I suddenly turned 60. Holy shit, where did the time go? I said to myself, *Write that book already*, and I set out to do just that. Not that I had a lot of dung collected in my life, comparatively speaking, but nevertheless, there was some.

So how does one go about becoming a writer after 60 years of doing something else?

I don't know about others, but I have a suspicion that I am not the only middle-aged woman with that same mission from observing the other ladies in my creative writing classes and at the local writing and publishing events. That's where I started: with writing classes.

At first, I took classes at the entry level with the Continuing Education programs at the local college that offered courses to adults in search of life-long learning goals. I owe Dona Sturmanis and Rand Zacharias for those first forays into the writing world: *Publishing Your Book*; *Editing*; *How to make a living writing*.

I did not ski a lot that year on Sundays, having lost my ski buddy after our break-up. To practice my imagination and writing skills, I set aside Sundays for my first writing attempts. It just so happened that I did not have enough ideas to write a novel, so I dedicated my time to writing short stories about events in my life that I thought were unusual, or intriguing, and possibly worth writing about.

To my surprise, my pen was flowing and the time flew by. Suddenly it was four hours later and I had a foolscap pad full of my long hand, well, let me call it by its proper name—shit. But I didn't know that at the time. I felt



Feeding Creative Spirit, Ajjic, Mexico

**I just love that creative process that my mind goes where it wants to go without control of my super ego; that the story takes shape and that even I don't know where it will end.**

pretty good about the products of my flowing, fancy Parker fountain pen that I had been given some twenty years ago by my ex and had not used much.

Then I got more courage and signed up for some intensive summer classes in the University of British Columbia's Creative Writing program. That class for serious writers opened my eyes. The slow analysis of the art of writing and discovery of the specific skills involved was to me, as if undressing a person and putting that human in front of an X ray machine (one of my jobs in a previous career) and suddenly seeing all the bones and soft tissue outlined on the screen in the darkness—otherwise invisible. Especially the workshop and commentary from other students inspired me to continue and use the skills I learned, and wanting to get better at it. The professor's gentle and encouraging guidance was leaving my ego intact. I owe her for lifting the veil and want to thank her here, Laisha Rosnau, author of *The Sudden Weight of Snow*.

The challenge to continue writing was not that much of a sacrifice for me—single and in control of my time, at least on weekends. Focusing on just writing without distractions produced its own rewards: I was feeling like a runner after a good run, high on my efforts and the stories that came from me—somehow. I just love that creative process that my mind goes where it wants to go without control of my super ego; that the story takes shape and that even I don't know where it will end. It's fascinating.

The question came up in class why a writer is writing. Would you write if nobody ever got to read your work? I knew I was not satisfied with just writing. Somebody should read my stories, so I started sending some to a close relative, my sister, and to friends. Their replies were as to be expected from loved ones: positive.

The question of why we write lingered on and I am not completely aware of what other motivations kept me going. Perhaps it is because I always tried to entertain my family at the dinner table. I was the youngest and a funny, cheeky kid, a bit of a tomboy. That urge has not completely left me, although my sense of humour is not always understood in this part of the world. I assume providing entertainment value still is a goal of mine, as well as possibly a bit of an extra income, hoping people will buy my stories.

It was not long before I thought I *could* write that book I probably have in me, but it will have to be a collection of short stories. I approached an editor, as a good edit makes or breaks the book I was told, which was confirmed on line by authors, publishers and self-publishers. My choice was Dona Sturmanis, as she has been a published writer and editor for many years and she operates an editing company with Rand Zacharias. My editors were brave enough to accept the assignment and take me—a first time writer—through the process. They dedicated a lot of their time to my drafts of the book and to its individual stories. I am eternally and wholeheartedly in debt to them for helping me through this process in a forthright and honest manner, not gilding the pill when it had to be swallowed. Many of the initial stories just were not good enough, or not interesting enough for a wider

audience, or needed work, etc. In the end, 12 interrelated stories remained and together make the novel about Adrienne and her friends, titled *On Thin Ice*.

It happened to be a lucky time for beginning authors. The first e-books were being published shortly after I got serious about writing. Self-publishing lost its low status as a vanity press = low quality books from people who just want to see their name in print. We were no longer prepared to wait for some agent's or publisher's nod to be published. Within two years, electronic readers like Kindle and Kobo took off, and iPads were sold by the millions. All those gadgets need books. The publishing industry turned on its head. Books that started as a lowly e-book now get a run like never before. An example of this is *Fifty Shades Of Grey* by E.L. James released in June 2011 that made her a household name, reviving the sex lives of millions of stale marriages.

I chose [www.bookbaby.com](http://www.bookbaby.com) that started publishing books last year, after having created expertise with publishing and distributing music and videos. With a manuscript professionally prepared by the editors and a great photo by a friend in my hands, the process was really easy. Within two proofs and ten days the book is published and can soon be downloaded from the E-retailers of your choice.

By the way, I don't write long hand anymore. Too many rewrites of the stories made that very onerous, but as a start it worked for me: the pen in my hand was so different from my computer use at work. That, in itself, created the freedom to do something completely different. Try it!

*More pieces can be found on my blog <http://babyboomerwrites.wordpress.com>. I would love to hear your comments and welcome questions.*

# WORDS FROM THE HEART

## Aunt Edna and Aunt Anna

Susan McCaslin

Their names dropped like summer rain,  
anednaananna, all those vowels running together  
in my mouth in Indiana which also ended with ana,  
and rolled like Indianola, the street where I lived.

They weren't really aunts and no kin but  
Dad's landladies when he boarded with their  
gentleness as a student and learned how to make  
applesauce, fried chicken, and pumpkin pie.

"They're old maid sisters, spinsters," mom laughed.  
I stared into the starveling faces of spinsterhood  
as they reclined as one on the pearl gray couch,  
and wondered how they seemed so happy.

Anna sang like a sparrow in the choir,  
taught me to play on the piano, "Jesus, Lover  
of My Soul." I could tell she was totally  
devoted and Jesus loved her back.

What man could so number each hair of her head  
with such unswerving passion?

From the centre of her mild lavender cloud  
she offered to let me use her old Underwood  
where I typed my first short story, then poems,  
while she marvelled at my cleverness.

Years later in Seattle, after Edna died,  
90-something Anna called dad, "Come save me,  
my brother has dumped me in a nursing home."

But dad couldn't come.  
I wanted to fly but was in school.

Now I see them posing before the Brownie camera  
in twenties-style long fur coats with fox head stoles—  
perfect flappers, unflappable,  
almost transparent in their singing bones.

Far too many relied on the classic formula  
of a beginning, a muddle, and an end.  
Philip Larkin, England, (1922-1986)

### The Old Fools

Philip Larkin

That is where they live:  
Not here and now, but where all happened  
once.  
This is why they give  
An air of baffled absence, trying to be there  
Yet being here.

Susan McCaslin is a prizewinning poet,  
author of eleven volumes of poetry,  
including her most recent, *Demeter Goes  
Skydiving* (University of Alberta Press,  
2011), which has recently been nominated  
for the British Columbia Book Prize  
(Dorothy Livesay Award) and the Alberta  
Book Prize (Robert Kroetsch Award).

## Fragmentation

Carolyn Cowan

What if we consist of fragments  
Seamlessly stitched together  
To form the surface of our body  
And cut deep to the core of our being?

Fragments held fast at the deepest circle  
By subconscious, primeval knowledge.

Our brain consults the primitive circle  
To construct the modern world  
Reposed in our DNA.

Blood flows with ancient and modern knowledge  
During its journey up through  
The fragments' unconscious filters.  
To do what we did not learn.  
To know what we did not experience.

We come from deep within our self.

## Resolve

Antoinette Voûte Roeder

I'm going to celebrate  
my wrinkles,  
stop lamenting droops  
and creases.

Let the looking glass  
take note. I will not  
let you stare me down  
again. I'll live within  
the finely folded, tender

The *Resolve* poem is available in Antoinette Voûte Roeder's 2010 volume of poetry called *Still Breathing*, available on [www.amazon.com/Still Breathing](http://www.amazon.com/Still-Breathing) is her second volume of poems, published by Apocryphile Press of Berkeley, California.

Three of Antoinette's poems from the same book of poetry are published in the Winter, 2012, issue of *Sage-ing with Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude*.

sheath of skin that has been  
mine these many years as if  
it is the lovely gown created

for the ball at which the prince  
met Cinderella, saw her only  
with the eyes of love.

# GROUP WRITING AND SHARING



In group writing and sharing

## Beth Raugust

I've been writing in many groups for about fifteen years, beginning when I retired early from a career as journalist, editor, communications consultant; so many words manipulated over the years, other people's words.

I wanted the time and space to finally write for me. And I discovered early that this is most fulfilling in the circle of others. Receiving and bearing witness, we connect at a powerful source far beyond the gossipy, newsy, god forbid, weather woes. **In group writing and sharing, I am heard without filters, surrounded by empathic acceptance, open to the freedom to be (and share) me, my words, my story, my heart.** And then reciprocate. Listen.

Sometimes I am bone dry empty. Sometimes I overflow, a raging cascade. But always there is the poignant universality of our story, our fragile human nature. I am in awe of the individuation that makes each of us unique, yet when we write and share, it is as one entity, one body. The resonance of ONE, the more precious for each person's perspective and lifetimes of experience sewn seamlessly through thought which becomes word. I once wrote a poem called *Flying* after a writing with several other women:

We women, writing  
weathered and still  
pens etch our lives in black  
on white.

Our pens hover, timeless  
blue herons circling the O s  
dotting the I s  
seeking our unspoken lives.

Hushed, our hands rush  
the flying lines, hold our swollen wombs  
breathe in each other's breath  
tell me a story tell me tell me

Their words cradle me  
in eiderdown and alabaster shells  
smooth and fragile, pale flecked eggs  
held between my palms.



Unfamiliar voices croon and cross  
 pollinate our inner landscapes  
 stories gone to ground, ink-laden  
 quills quiescent as full-bellied fledglings.

Then,  
 Virgin flight we soar  
 splash the wind with indigo wings  
 feed our open-mouthed pages  
 hungry to hear and be heard.

Writing in group transcends all barriers of age, gender, affluence, circumstance. In many instances we know each other solely through our writing time together. The fundamental knowing that each of our stories will be honored and accepted as is creates a deep intimate trust. It is the holy time of being with one another at very moving non-verbal transformational levels. It is the play time that swells with laughter that ends in tears, hugs, and hiccups. Blessed release.

Writing in group has seen me through open heart surgery, recovery from major stroke (for months, my script wavering and child-like, my speech halting and garbled), the near-death of one son, the slow freefall into addictions by another, the birth of an illegitimate grandson. There is always the delicious ageless remembering of the Me that is separate from the lives of my loved ones, and from my own little bellyaches. All is valid; all is witnessed.

There have been, and are, moments of joy and grief, amazement and yes, rage. My fellow traveler/scribes keep me grounded, balanced, encourage me to be the Freedom Beth who sings, howls, whispers my Truth.

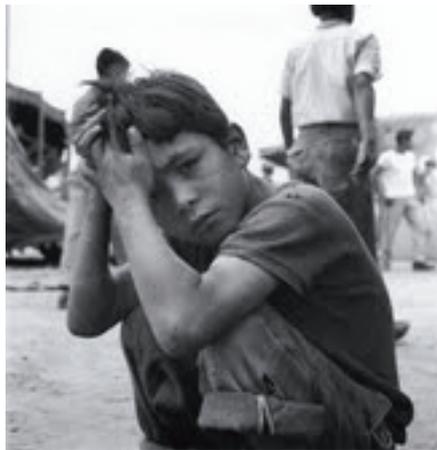
Sometimes we talk about our experience together. It's been called Poor Man's Therapy and Dream Journeying. One woman calls it Being Held Like a Baby. A middle-aged man says it's Putting Together the Shattered Pieces.

# ART IN TRANSIT

## Carolyn Cowan

As we absorb great artwork by *Georgia O'Keefe*, *Matisse*, or *Ansel Adams*, we can remember that their art emerged from a far greater source of creativity: ourselves. As the human race, we are genuine works of art, infinitely more complex and interesting than a created art piece.

The photographs displayed here pay homage to the beauty of "us" as we evolve from childhood to elderhood. They are a reminder that each of us is a work of Art in Transit.



Top: BROTHERS Photographer, Reva Brooks (1913-2004)

Above left: DRUMMER, Jim Copeman, World Fusion percussionist Photographer, Yuri Akuney

Above middle: MEXICAN BOY, San Miguel de Allende, 1959, Photographer, Jeremy Taylor

Above right: MIME, Montreal 1998, Photographer, Jeremy Taylor

Right: HOMBRE, Photographer, Reva Brooks (1913-2004)

# THE ART OF BEING CREATIVE

**Yvonne Goldberg**

**Ask yourself this:  
Will I regret at one  
point in my life that I  
have not tried enough  
to be creative?**

It has been eight years in the Okanagan now. When we moved here we were struck by the abundance of smell and color in springtime. We could not believe it! It was like an impressionistic vision, all these beautiful luscious blossoms on endless rows of fruit trees and then the lilacs opened...heaven! We bought a little vineyard near a bluff and the unpredictable weather and wildlife is a never ending spectacle. To be able to live here and do what you love is absolute luxury for the soul.

I love music and art; I could never decide which of the two I wanted more. I cannot separate them; I would be a traitor. Naturally I ended up studying both. Art and music are close relatives - there is no music without art and no art without music. Think about going to an art opening, there will be music. Go to a concert and you will see artwork. Painters and sculptors, musicians and actors have always found each other. You can't separate your senses. Often people say "I cannot play an instrument, I can't sing, I am too shy to hum a melody, I'm not good at painting, I am afraid to mess it up"... on and on we find excuses to not tap into our art and music body (spirit), but it is there! And we all admire the people who can express themselves through it.

Ask yourself this:

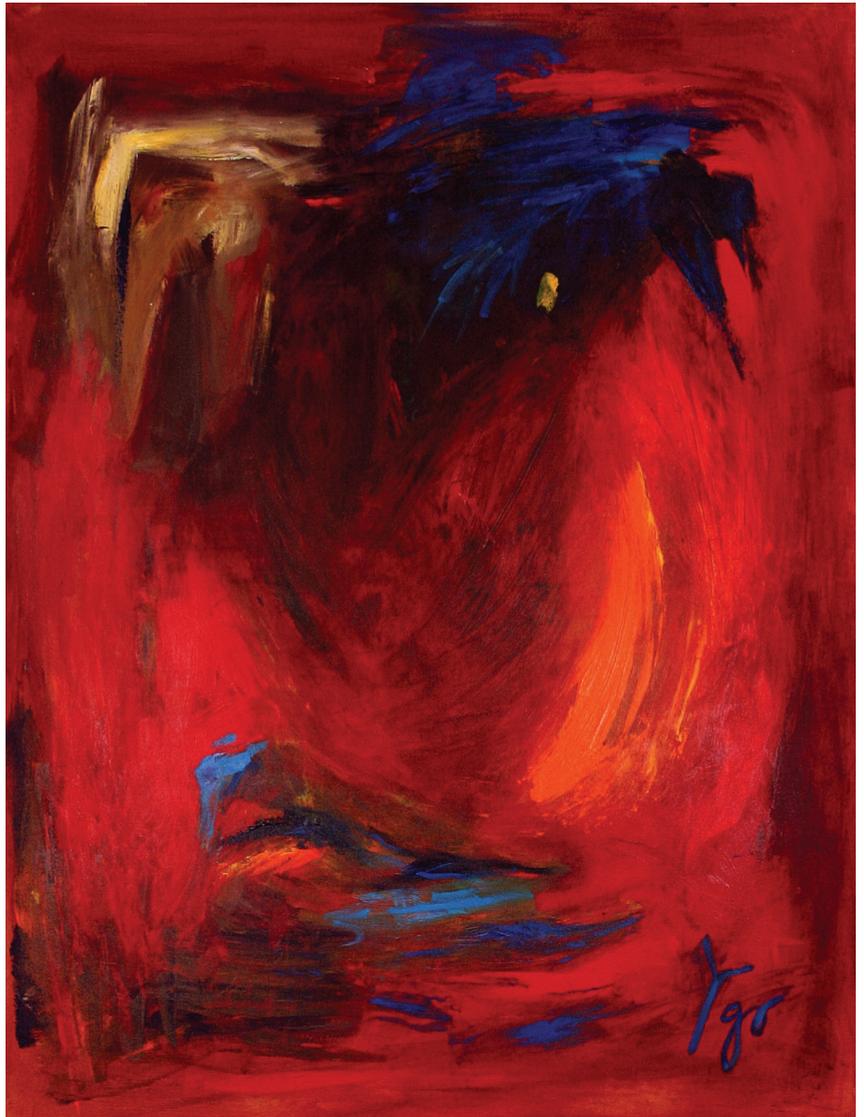
Will I regret at one point in my life that I have not tried enough to be creative? If you listen to your inner voice it may tell you

"go ahead, start up somehow, somewhere ...", but life gets always in the way. What most of us forget: When we are creative, it creates happiness, plain and innocent happiness. There is no fault or guilt in it, it only nurtures the soul and makes you and others happy (when they end up with your painting or song...or not).

My grandmother was a pianist, so there was always a piano in our house. My mother loved all kinds of music - classical, jazz, musical, opera, ballet. At the early age of five I could recognize an opera by the aria. I always had a pencil in my hand and I drew and drew. Our house was small, the music huge, my drawings endless - I knew from an early age on that I wanted to be a painter and musician. Mind me, a dancer too, but there was no hope for lessons in our little town. I remember through all the hard times in my life, music always carried me through. And now when I am "in the middle" of a painting, it consumes all my thoughts and emotions until the painting is finished. If music and art had such a profound effect on that little girl that was me, how come as adults we are not often as capable of enjoying life open heartedly as children are? Of course, that's easy to answer: Life, responsibili-

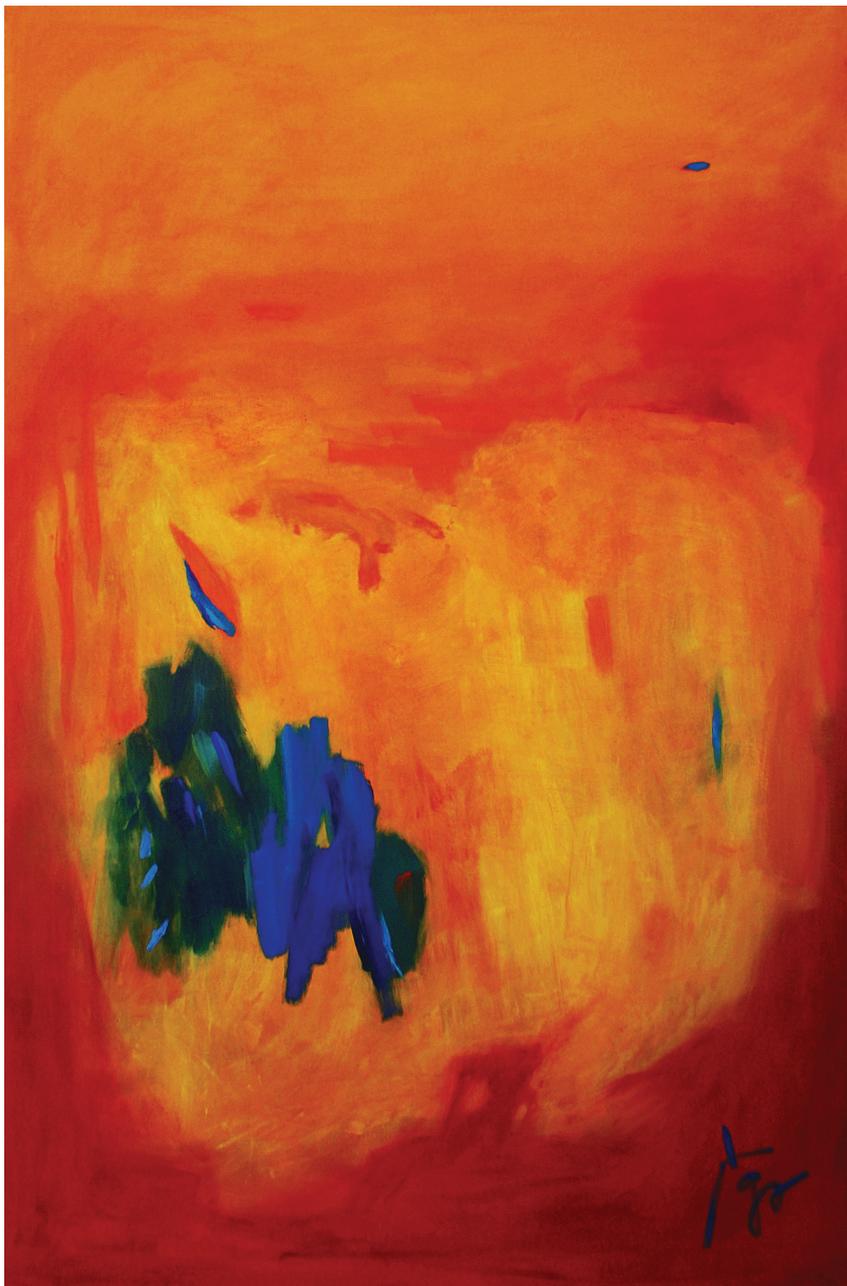
Yvonne Goldberg, ElToro

**When you draw you observe, you feel your fingers moving quickly over the paper or canvas and your mind goes to a place where the brain sets itself free.**



ties, necessities, tragedies - all interfere. But - in your leisure time - you can give yourself permission safely - to create that space that nurtures your heart and soul.

We are all born innocent and creative - what makes the difference is the awareness that comes from it. When you draw you observe, you feel your fingers moving quickly over the paper or canvas and your mind goes to a place where the brain sets itself free - you start to create from the heart and you can enter a trance-like state. The same happens with music - when you play an instrument or listen to music, you can transcend normal consciousness into a new world of emotions and dreams. It's like going to a wonderful movie and getting totally lost in it. You are sorry when the show is over, you feel empty and want more, you love the escape and you want to experience more. Well, taking that kind of a "holiday" is up to you and the most beautiful get-away you can think of is possible if you let yourself go there. It is free just like you are when you are experiencing it. It's proven how therapeutic and healing all the arts are and how we don't all need to be geniuses to enjoy those benefits.



Yvonne Goldberg, Yellow Planet

Whether you paint or play music, plant a garden, decorate your home or cook a great meal – the creative process is where all the fun, learning and benefit lie.

I love paintings abstracts - especially when I have just finished a painting that is more realistic – then I go all out and just paint bold to let the energy out. Right now I am working on a whole series of abstracts – all large canvases. The reason my paintings vary in style is that first, I am an impressionist – but life is too short to just experiment in one thing. I love to paint in different styles to find out the artistry and mystique of that specific style. I love Monet, van Gogh, Gauguin, but then also Picasso and Matisse. Simply – I do not like to limit myself at all - that's why you see abstracts and impressionistic landscapes or more realistic portraits in my gallery. I'm high on life and high on art - therefore I paint everything! I am the same happy when I paint a room - as long as I have a paintbrush in my hand!

Creativity is an outlet for what lives within you – to let out all the emotions you have inside in an artistic way. Creativity is not living in the

box - whatever it is that you create. It is from you, through you; it is you, authentic and pure – it's streaming light from your soul into the universe touching others - and ultimately it is your heart speaking to another through creativity which for me equals love and joy for life itself.

YGO Fine Art Gallery, 101-207 Main Street, Penticton, BC V2A 5B1  
[www.ygo-fineart.com](http://www.ygo-fineart.com)

# ArtWalk 2012

Saturday & Sunday, September 8 & 9, 10am-5pm  
Lake Country Community Complex 10241  
Bottomwood Lake Rd, Lake Country, BC

Join us at **ArtWalk 2012** [www.artwalk.ca](http://www.artwalk.ca) to kick off our second year of publication. This issue will go on-line September 6th, 2012

Lake Country ArtWalk, the largest of its kind in the BC interior, showcases original works of art and live performances created by visual and performing artists living in the Okanagan Valley.

The Fall issue of *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* will join **ArtWalk 2012** in promoting the theme of **Art for Change**.

One of Canada's most esteemed scholars Marshall McLuhan said:  
"I think of art, at its most significant, as a DEW line, a Distant Early Warning system that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen to it."

In our fall issue you will meet Okanagan artists whose works are speaking out to share wisdom and insights gained from their personal creative adventures.

# SAGE-ING WITH CREATIVE SPIRIT, GRACE & GRATITUDE

## A Journal of the Arts & Aging

Edited by Karen Close  
& Carolyn Cowan

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This fourth issue of our journal *Sage-ing With Creative Spirit, Grace and Gratitude* completes our first season of publication. It is a time for celebration and reflection – indeed just like aging. Thanks to all of you who are reading and watching us grow, and to those of you who have enriched our journal with your contributions. We believe the caliber of this journal is a tribute to what can be accomplished by giving from the heart. Creative spirit is within each of us, waiting to awaken us to all we can be, individually and collectively. **Know yourself. Be yourself. Love yourself. Share yourself.**