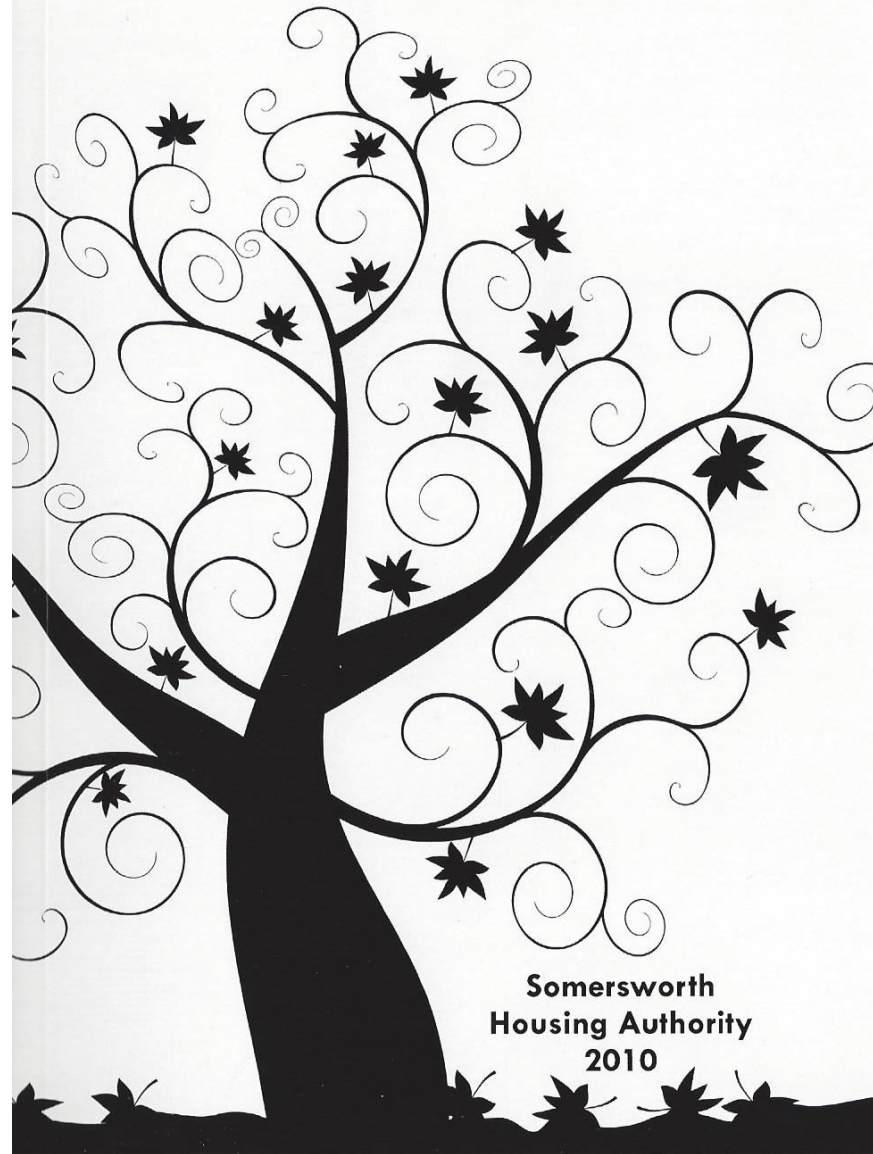


# **Our Tuesday Nights Out**

## **Write To Be**



**Somersworth  
Housing Authority  
2010**



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## INTRODUCTION: A Bit of History, A Touch of Philosophy Nancy Eichhorn

Each week we read a poem and receive a prompt. We write for 15 minutes, letting whatever comes find space on the page. We have learned to silence our internal editors—the collage of voices that strives to hinder our progress, that thrives on insulting, attacking, shaming us. We have learned to set aside the need for grammatical correctness, for polished, perfect prose, for any externally imposed sense of literary structure. This is the time for exploring the vast recesses of our mind and body to resurrect and at times rescue the stories we've shut off, the stories that we need to tell.

When we are done writing, we each read our writing aloud and receive positive supportive feedback. We treat each piece as fiction, and we respond to what has been written on the page. We do not use the word "You." We do not assume the person who wrote the story is the main character or the narrator. We talk about what works in the piece and what resonates within our own being. We focus on the story and on the writer, letting this moment be hers completely.

Since our initial meeting, we've written countless tales and lived countless stories. Our time together



affords a cherished space to be ourselves, to experience different sides of ourselves, and to even capture or recreate parts of ourselves that were cast off in order to survive. Each week we come not knowing what the day will bring or what writing will surface; each week we are blessed with insight and growth, with compassion and love.

Writing in a circle with others who are committed to the same process creates a sense of security. We learn because of our differences and because of our vulnerabilities. The truth that surfaces on each person's page is startling and compelling. We hear what the writer often times cannot hear. We point out what the writer may have missed or never noticed in the first place. We hold one another's hands as we experience difficult stories so we are never ever alone. No one should be alone with their stories.

When I initiated this group, I deliberately left journaling out. Facilitating groups for several years as well as being a consummate journal writer myself, I realized that journaling often times retraumatized the journaler. Sitting alone, immersed in the details of horrific events the journaler is as isolated with her fear, her pain, her suffering as she was in the initial moments when life as she knew it was threatened, when her body was primed and poised for flight or fight but couldn't free herself so instead her body innately switched to the stupor of feigning death, the immobility that animals use to outwit their tormentors if at all possible. Sitting alone in the vast blank space of a journal page feeling the feelings that were blocked initially because they were too intense to feel, too life threatening to be with

creates the same physiological response time and time again. The memories stay lodged as tiny fragments, flashbacks that haunt the survivor.

Some of our prompts call forth details from painful events long past; and yet, they feel as real as if happening today. The difference is that we are together in a supportive circle. We keep one another grounded in the present tense. We pace how far into the experience we go as we write and as we read. We are in control here, and we know that we are safe to step off an edge—the group is our safety net. We can shed tears welled up inside, release screams held for decades, and allow our bodies to move as they need to move, to let go of the pent up energy that was never allowed to complete its cycle when the initial trauma occurred. Sometimes, the release happens physically—there are lots of tears sometimes. Most often, the release happens through the characters we create. As we read our fictionalized stories, share the escapades of characters designed to reflect our masked truth, we experience the same physiological release because our brain doesn't know the difference between actually doing an act and simply thinking about the act. The intention is the same; the bodily experience is the same. And we are safe because we are together; the details are not trapping us in the past but actually moving us forward toward a healthier future.

Writing in a sacred circle allows historical wounds to surface and be sensed through a distanced story and with the lived experience released. We heal because we write together and share together and because our stories are honored, because our truth is contained

with love and compassion, and once expressed we are set free.

The stories in this book shed light on the experiences we've lived both past and present. They were written from prompts over the past year and reflect part of our journey. There are few certainties in our lives—thankfully this circle of women is one of them.

*Nancy Eichhorn*



*Last Year's Book Celebration*

## OUR SHARED RESPECTS

We respect our confidentiality—what happens here, what is said here, stays here.

We honor the right to pass. No one has to share.

We start on time, and we end on time.

We treat all writing as fiction. Therefore, our response is focused on the writing. We do not address the writer personally. We rely on terms such as: "the writer," "the narrator," and "the character," rather than the pronoun "You."

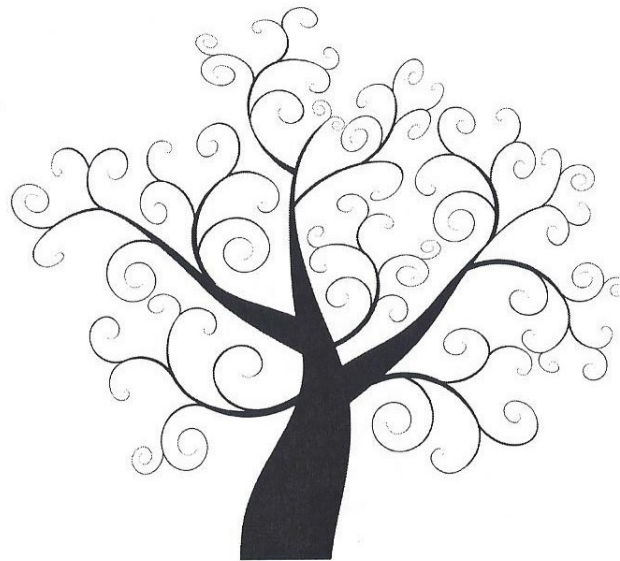
We only comment on the text, on what we remember about the writing itself. We do not relate the writer's story to our own, nor do we talk about ourselves when we are responding to a writer.

We let each person finish speaking before adding our voice to the circle.

We avoid making assumptions or assigning intentions, beliefs, or motives to one another.

We assume everyone comes with positive intent, and if necessary we talk to one another, taking time to check things out if a comment or action doesn't feel right.

## **What the writing group means to me**





### Kathy Cox

When I began in this group a little over four years ago, I was amazed at the fact that I could write something meaningful in fifteen minutes. I remember saying to myself, "I can't do this, what was I thinking," and then I started to write. I went through the same process each week.

I didn't realize at the time, but now I know it was because I was fighting what my heart needed to address. Once I realized I only had ten minutes left to write and didn't want to be left with an empty page, I scratched something onto the paper I thought didn't make any sense at all but I thought, at least I've written something. Then it would be my turn to share my writing if I wanted to.

When I read my writing, sometimes choking back tears, I knew I had written something that needed to be said. By listening to the responses of the other writers, I hear my story from another voice: "I hear that I've been heard."

The writing of all the women is profound, and we each feel, as well as, hear, what the writer has written. I don't mean to say that the writing is always intense; sometimes it's joyful, whimsical, or just plain funny. There isn't a week that goes by that I don't say a prayer of thanks for Nancy for giving us all this opportunity.

Every Tuesday I feed my soul by listening to and being heard by these amazing women contained in this book. I am privileged and grateful to be part of this group.

### Nancy Eichhorn

I've twisted and turned in this group. I've come and gone. I've been busy, and I've simply been present. I've grown because of this group, with this group—the writing itself has guided me deeper within, allowed me to evolve—fictional characters carry my pain into places where it falters and falls, then flies free with emotional release and recovery. Characters portray aspects of my story and other peoples' stories; their collage existence affords me time to figure things out, to negotiate intricacies of relationships healthy and not, to wonder with dysfunctions mine and not. My Self is awakening, coming to a presence, a consciousness that feeds my Soul, supports my Spirit and guides my Goddess energy.

Something magical occurs when we meet each week. The energy is subtle at times: a realization that creeps in under cover; a feeling that is expressed in a single line; a fear that shines in the light of discovery and is rendered impotent. Other times, it's overt, like a two by four slamming to the ground with a gust of intensity. The stories that surface, the poems that play on the page, the words that wind together like a winsome whistle feel like songs. The lyrics reside within us long after the workshop has ended, become part of the chorus of our daily life.

We are never alone—we have our stories, both our own and one another's. We are never alone—we have a connection that resides deep within the being of our love. I revel in the moments we break through

the density of hidden stories and reveal ourselves to ourselves first and then to one another, both seeking acceptance and forgiveness and offering it to ourselves and to one another.

### Jean Marie Eisenstat

As one of the original members, I experience the group as it continuously evolves. This circle of women reminds me often of how capable anyone is to write the words that are within them. Listening to the words of others, I am blessed, and in this hearing of their words realize there is much I may not know, or would not have known on my own, and I am expanded as a person because of it.

The words, revelation, revealed on paper.



### Bonnie L. Fladeland

I always had a yearning to be creative, especially with words since a young age. I loved to read poems that would rhyme especially the second and last lines. I dreamed someday of being able to do this, and I started to write down various things about my life in a diary when I was a teenager. I never did call myself a writer but the words flowed so easily for me. I just assumed everyone could write. I have written poems for my mom's 80th, 90th and 100th birthday, and for other friends' birthdays, too. I have been awarded the Editor's Choice Award from the International Society of Poets and received the Outstanding Achievement in Poetry Award from the International Society of Poets. Writing is how I express myself most deeply. It's all about our stories you see, and everyone has a story to write. I love being part of this writing group. We all have become a wonderful circle of women with integrity.



### Esther Morrow

Thank you for this gift of a writing group each Tuesday afternoon at the Somersworth Housing Authority. Each year I realize more and more how much this group means to me. Without the support of this group, there would be little writing and especially the writing that is in this book. Each person's feedback and comments about my writing pushes me to write more. Each poem seems to me just a bunch of scrambled words without the group's feedback. Their loving comments and understanding of what I write far exceeds my expectations. This group of women, led by Nancy, senses a meaning in my words that I could never embrace. To have a group of women comment on my writing in such an understanding way encourages me to write more. I am eternally grateful for the feedback and loving way in which each person speaks to my heart. We are all in this world together in supporting the written page. There is no wrong, no shame, only intelligent, concerned, and open thoughts to consider. Each person finds her voice to support a written piece in her own way. Creativity soars under such circumstance. Each person is invited to speak her truth about another's writing and express her interpretation in a clear voice with an open heart. Acceptance and encouragement are the main stays of the group.

I thank each person again and again for allowing me to be a part of this group of creative writers. It is such a joy to listen to each as she reads from her

own written words, and I have a chance to express my thoughts about her writing. Ideas flow from page to page as each piece is read aloud to the group. All ideas are accepted into the creative whole. We become mirrors for each other each Tuesday afternoon, and we all go home much enriched. As I contemplate my desire to be a part of this group, I realize how much I enjoy and learn from each person. I am blessed with a group such as this and hope my ideas and comments enrich others lives. This, I believe, is how our world will be healed.

## Sharyn Vien

The Write To Be group is one of my favorite places to be, every Tuesday afternoon at 3:15, for the weekly gathering of inspiring, supportive women writers. For a couple of hours, we manage to write for fifteen minutes to a writing prompt, read the pieces of work aloud, give and receive safe, genuine feedback, and share personal writing experiences.

The *fifteen minute writing prompt*, however, is new for me. No time to edit and *too* much time to think. My fear of not making it seems to block my creativity. Most frustrating is the fact that my muse does not appear! Intimidated, I suspect, by the prospect of writing something of little or no consequence. Each week, I ask myself, "Where is the one in me that makes the writing flow? Come out, come out! Be my hero! I need you! Save me from the discombobulating word groups that literally fall on the blank page in front of me."

In spite of my pleading, he, she, or it toys with me, presenting me with tiny jewels here and there such as a profound idea, a catchy phrase, or a word that demands attention. When this happens, I hang onto the hope of receiving the entire treasure, but it seems that my wanting only makes the muse once again disappear, leaving me in total frustration.

At times I feel that I will go utterly mad before I can learn the techniques of the Write To Be group. Yet, I know my frustrations and anxieties are much

ado about nothing. I'm thinking even if my muse never shows for the writing prompt and in spite of the self-doubt that creeps in to annoy me, I will continue to step up to the challenge each week.

## **Group Prompts:**

- **What I Know for Sure**
- **I Take Your Hand**

