

Writing from the Heart SCN's Fifth Annual Virtual Conference

Saturday, October 4, 2025

8:45am-5:00pm Central Time



Join us for a day of interactive workshops, engaging panels, thoughtful conversations, and dedicated time to write. Whether you're just there to listen or ready to immerse yourself in a full-day writing and sharing experience, this conference will meet you wherever you are in your writing journey. Space is limited. [Click here to register and meet the presenters.](#) Zoom links will be emailed after registration. Recordings will be available to all who register.

Conference Details & Schedule

8:45am-9:00am: Welcome & Opening Remarks

Speakers: SCN Vice-President Len Leatherwood & SCN Program Director Liz Beaty

9:00am-10:00am: Books as Bridges: How Story Connects, Heals & Guides Us

Presenters: Kathryn Brown Ramsperger, Eileen Sanchez, Debra Thomas, Anju Gattani

Your words can spark change. Believe it. Write with us. Connect and explore how your writing can close divides, spark dialogue, and foster real understanding. Four award-winning novelists reveal what inspired their work, how they shaped it to resonate deeply, and why it moved others to empathy and action. Begin writing your story, share it, and engage in Q&A. Leave with the seed of a story that can take root. Your story matters.

10:10am-11:10am: Invisible Ink: Concealing Real People, Preserving Real Truth

Presenter: Marsha Jacobson

The tension between telling an authentic story and protecting the people we write about is one of the toughest challenges authors must face. This session will explore key writing techniques for disguising characters' identities and protecting their privacy without sacrificing emotional truth or narrative power. We'll also look at how to maintain our readers' trust when using these methods. There will be a robust Q&A as well as the opportunity to write and share your work at least once.

11:20am-12:20pm: The Poetics & Power of Place

Presenter: Molly Dwyer

Place has importance both in fiction and memoir. It's a strong foundation for building emotionally meaningful stories. This interactive workshop uses PowerPoint presentations and writing exercises to help writers discover the potential of place in narrative. We will look at ways to research and build the culture and landscape of a world. Come explore how place can be used to bring characters alive, strengthen dialogue, and build an enticing plot.

12:30pm-1:30pm: Panel Discussion—SCN 2024 Sarton & Gilda Award Winning Authors

Moderator: SCN Vice-President Len Leatherwood

This pre-recorded session will include excerpts from the original discussion. Attendees are encouraged to listen while they grab lunch and take a break between workshops.

Where I'm From

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I am from a family of storytellers
Where a story begins and ends three days later.
Although I never lived where I was born
I seem to have inherited the storytelling gene.
Not hard stuff to tell like family secrets
Withheld or never shared
Like how and when our parents met
Or why my young mother was pictured
in a photo I found which was labeled
from a New Haven, Connecticut photography studio.
What was she doing so far from home?
Sadly, neither did I nor my siblings know
how we lost a brother at birth
in between our own entry into the world
Unlit corners of family history
In my family of storytellers
Held back
Not all, perhaps—but
Out of respect, stories not fit to see the light
Because they are private, sad or tragic—no one's business
Or too complicated to explain
Stories checked at the door or
Hidden away in a box of photos
I have inherited
A bit of that Appalachian reticence

Memories in the Packing Material

Kimberly Davis
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We moved Dad into the Assisted Living facility near us, and he packed that room with so much stuff you could barely turn around. What wouldn't fit went to our garage. I'd bring him to the house sometimes where he'd sit in the garage and sort through his stuff. What didn't stink of cat pee was broken, but it was his. He had saved every article of clothing he ever owned. We hung a metal rod in the air-conditioned part of my husband's workshop so that Dad had his complete wardrobe on display. He would fret about where this or that shirt had gotten to. He could remember exactly when and where he'd gotten every single one of them. They hung all starch-stiff in plastic bags from the dry cleaner.

There were ancient hand tools and a box of glasses with gold rims wrapped in brittle yellow newspaper from 1964, *The Brookshire Times*. The treasure in that box was a quarter-page ad on page seven for Salt Grass Saddlery's Summer Clearance Sale. Of course, that's where most of Daddy's shirts and

tailored suits with Western styled yokes originated. It's also where Dad's tooled leather belt with the great big silver buckle came from—the one he swung 'round his head to keep the nursing staff at bay in his final act of defiance. He had become too hard to handle, and they had him involuntarily committed to the psych hospital that day. He was never himself again.

Salt Grass Saddlery was Daddy's store in 1964, and I was the most fashionable four-year-old in Houston since Western Wear was all the rage, and Salt Grass Saddlery was the place to buy it. "Everything for the Horse and Rider."

A Young Chickie

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My husband, Chris, was nine years older than me. He was my beloved. Whenever I would mention that I was getting older, he would say, "You will always be my young chickie." Silly as it sounds, part of me believed him. Chris died last year, three months after a brain cancer diagnosis. I am bereft, heartbroken, and trying to find my way forward.

Weeks after Chris passes, I hear that one of the local universities is starting a research project, studying the effects of exercise and sleep hygiene on recent widows. I am intrigued. I had promised Chris that I would thrive to live a good life for both of us. I think this study might be just what I need to jumpstart my pledge. I will be a good role model for our kids, and live a life that would make Chris proud.

I set up a phone interview to determine my acceptance into the study. Although I try to use my most upbeat voice, before long I am crying and can barely formulate answers to the questions. At the conclusion of the interview, I receive the surprising news that I don't qualify as I am not depressed enough. I am now sobbing in earnest. "Don't worry," the young woman says as she tries to reassure me. "You may qualify at a later date. We often find that elderly widows often become more depressed as time goes on."

This shocks me out of my tears. "Oh, are you also doing a study on elderly widows?" I ask.

There is a long silence. She finally responds, "It's this study. You are an elderly widow."

With that statement, my whole world shifts. I manage to hang up before embarrassing myself further. The absurdity of the situation hits and I start to laugh. I decide it's time to work on my "When I'm old, I'll wear purple" self. I will be a sage, a cone, a wise old woman. But between Chris and me, for luck and love, maybe just a little bit of a young chickie.