



# Library podcast

## Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series #380

### 00:00:01 Peggy

The It's About Time Writers' Reading series was started in 1990 as a way to promote and create a series where senior writers could share their work. Ever since then, it has been our delight to be welcomed at various venues by librarians throughout Seattle and the Greater Puget Sound and able to introduce new and experienced voices. It's not about whether you've been published always, but about whether you're ready to read and share your work no matter what. And I'm happy to say that we are one of the most I believe, welcoming audiences for people who've never read before and always happy to welcome anyone back. During regular times, we would have three featured readers and a writer's craft. Since going online in April 2020 we've been concentrating on the reading, and I'm delighted to have been able to welcome many people who wouldn't be able to attend otherwise or didn't

### 00:01:13 Peggy

know about us. So if this is your first time, we're on Facebook YouTube, and you can find the events every second Thursday of the month on The Seattle Public Library website. And you're always welcome to drop in, do a three-minute open reading and ask to be considered for a featured reading. I'm currently, you know, booking. I believe I have an opening in December. Tonight I'm very happy to welcome The Seven Writers Northwest. Is that, I think- I hope that's right. I move it around. We had a chance to talk before starting the recording. And there's has been a wonderful and inspiring story of the- yet another example of the good that can come out of people gathering to write. And in this case, it has so many rewards that are benefiting one another, us, the readers, and also a local nonprofit. So I would like to introduce Jane Spaulding now, who's going to tell you a little bit about their group and their project. Jane.

### 00:02:25 Jane

2020 was a year like none of us has ever come up against. Early in the year,

### 00:02:31 Jane

the writing group began capturing our experiences on paper. Then I attended a writing workshop on Zoom, who even knew what that was early in 2020. Our teacher said, the primary job of writers is to bear witness. After a while, we will forget the details. So, right? Our group took up the challenge and began to write with more intention. The process was positive and more therapeutic than we could have imagined. Beth was the first among us to say, maybe we should compile what we're writing and

publish it. I've published books on blurb.com. We can do this. The result is "Writing While Masked: Observations on 2020." It is composed of blogs, essays and poems about the moment and how we individually responded to it. Now, I'm pleased to say the book is in the process of being updated and reprinted by the Washington State University press. The new "Writing While Masked" should be out by the end of 2021. And it is part of women writing history, a coronavirus journaling project sponsored by the National

**00:03:58 Jane**

Women's History Museum. They are creating a living archive to document the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on women. We decided if we made any money through this self publishing project, we would donate it to literacy source. They assist immigrants and low-income adults throughout King County in gaining literacy skills and citizenship. To date, we've raised nearly 3500 dollars. If you haven't read the book and you would like to copies are available at Third Place Books and Phinney Books, I suggest you ask for it if you go into the store, or you can order it online. We hope you enjoy this personal look at the year we all survived.

**00:04:51 Peggy**

Thank you so much. I, I was one who read about you guys in The Seattle Times and immediately thought, oh, I want to reach out and see if they want to come do a reading. So I also found and shared the inspiration that you took from that. And as I work with my middle and high school students, I've been encouraging them to write journals to let them know that right now, as you said, they are bearing witness. This is history. This is with them for the rest of their lives. And it's just a valuable moment that we've survived and being able to live through. And I'm thrilled that all generations are being represented now. So and I can't wait to read it myself. I better go to Phinney, and I'm going to remember, you go in and you say, maybe I'll do it at Secret Garden too. I'll make them order it and say, yes, I'd like, I need several copies. Please let me bring it to all my friends. The first reader tonight from this group is Wanda Herndon, who I've had the pleasure to meet, even in Pre-COVID days,

**00:06:01 Peggy**

and was delighted to learn that in addition to being a fellow member of the Cancer Lifeline Advisory board that she was a writer. So she was Starbucks' Senior Vice President of the Global Communications. She founded her current business, W Communications after she retired in 2006 and 2008. She returned to Starbucks for one year to help restore Starbucks' growth trajectory. Wanda held Dupont and Dow Chemical leadership positions from 1978 to 1995. She was a minority owner of Seattle, professional basketball teams from 2001 to 2006, and she co-produced Tony award-winning, Broadway musicals, Memphis and my personal favorite Come from Away. Welcome Wanda.

**00:06:56 Wanda**

Thank you so much. I'm honored to read my poem, "I Cry." [Reading] "Home alone. I Cry. I cried for my ancestors, stolen from African homes to suffer. The Injustice of slavery in America, viewed as inhuman Beasts of Burden. They died. I cried for my people who survived this shameful history

**00:07:38 Wanda**

oppressed and terrorized. Their tears water the roots of inequality. They suffered. I cried for an American Dream, lost, replaced by a Black person's nightmare. Then. And now. Only we understand. I cry for members of my race, callously slain by evil Klu Klux Klan, vigilantes, neighbors, and the law. Thousands still die. I cry about poverty and destitution engulfing our communities, unbreakable cycles of despair begun so long ago on slave ships, plantations. Few escape. I cry, incensed by the murder of yet another Black person. Knee on neck, asleep in bed, jogging in their neighborhood. America is our country too. I cry because we are not welcome. We are tolerated by those who say it wasn't me. A perk of white privilege. I cry because our sacrifices for America are unrecognized. And our deficiencies emphasized. Equality eludes us. I cry because our ancestors died for my chance. Decades later, hate still festers and threatens our souls. The pain is too much. I cry for justice. I cry." Thank you.

**00:10:20 Peggy**

Thank you, Wanda. I wish that was less true than when I first read it last July. Very powerful. Thank you.

**00:10:32 Peggy**

The next reading from this group of seven is from Beth Weir. Beth is a native of New Zealand, but has lived in the US since 1976. She is retired twice. Once as a college professor from North Carolina. And again, as the Director of Dunn Gardens in Seattle. She started writing seriously after first retirement., Welcome, Beth,

**00:11:06 Beth**

All right, mine's called "Suspension of the Moment," and was written in May 20. [Reading] "In a news clip, I heard Arundhati Roy, the Indian writer of melodious novels, describe this time of the virus as one of suspension. In other words, the past is stalled. The future is uncertain. And the time in between the right now is still and it allows for contemplation. In a sense. The present is not going anywhere. And the past cannot inform it. Her insight sheds light on What? On why Roy is a Man Booker Prize winner. I feel her characterization of the moment in my being during the daily mental health walks I take with Jack,

**00:11:57 Beth**

our three year old terrier. To get our wrinkles out, we sometimes go to a place where the relationship between the walk and the sniffing opportunities are high. That would be the small local dog park. Sometimes we walk where I prefer to go. That would be my neighborhood, or the Burke Gilman Trail three blocks from my home. What is true of these suspended times when there is little traffic is that the daily walks are placid. As such, it encourages the enjoyment of the spontaneous street theater encountered. In normal times, small dramas may have remained unnoticed. The warm Spring day I was wearing a floppy red sun hat comes to mind. I was visited by a hummingbird bent on sipping from it and confused when he could not. He stared at me at eye-level. Left and came back again twice more, clearly frustrated. I had never been chastised by a hummingbird before and can now attest it is a possibility. There is also the case of the gentle 150 pound dog who stood on my foot and leaned against me in the

**00:13:13 Beth**

dog park, not letting me pass after her. I had a social distance chat with his owner. The animal was a herd of my nature and thought, I now belonged in his pack. In addition to uncovering the small dramas of life, human contact is a bonus. It's need for gratification is evident in the spontaneous "hello!" and exchange of small pleasantries when passing complete strangers. Likewise, people who walk by when I am gardening in the front yard will often stop and ask me what am I doing. I would guess you really are interested in the fact I have a lion's head maple tree. That is not the point. Such actions help satisfy our needs for human interaction. But they are also at ease like a movie trailer. And each walk. You get a glimpse of human contact with the caution that the full monty won't be yours for a while yet. But every so often you get to have a substantial treat as part of the modest walking regime. Almost the whole movie that happened last week when I stepped into a street I don't usually

**00:14:24 Beth**

include in my rounds. The street has city-planted trees in the parking strip that are substantial enough to hold the weight of both a hammock and a small occupant. Strung up between two sets of trees was a fabric hammock, clearly occupied. The user was very deep in the fold and covered over by the edge of the fabric. I followed my custom of pointing out things to Jack by saying that someone had found a good hiding place. Then a head popped up into the open. It belonged to a boy of about eight with apple red cheeks. He was clutching a book in one hand by the author, Rick Riordan. As a former reading teacher, I was exstastic to see a child reading period and more than pleased by the complexity of the text. I said, 'what are you reading?' It is impossible for me to do otherwise. The child grinned. 'Greek myths.' 'Lovely.' I told him. 'Are they good?' He nodded before sliding back to his own world, both within and without the hammock. That little adventure counted

**00:15:35 Beth**

as whole film. The whole Monte in these suspended times." Thank you.

**00:15:42 Peggy**

Thank you. That delightful.

**00:15:48 Peggy**

Let's see here, moving on to our next of our seven writers. Laura C. Lippmann. She is a retired Family Physician raised and educated in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Residency Training brought her to Seattle where she was seduced by the mountains and the sea. She's lived with their husband ever since. Their son and daughter and their children live nearby. And I noticed another theme emerging in some of these bios. She's started writing in earnest after retirement. Welcome Laura.

**00:16:28 Laura**

This was written later in the year. You'll hear why. It's called "I Tried to be Grateful." [Reading] "I tried to be grateful to my husband this morning. He's pissed. I want the car, which I usually cede to him, because he's so ADD and I'm just a little. I tried to be grateful because I have him. And I know my

friend Jane has no one. She's alone in this Pandemic Wilderness. She goes for long walks with the borrowed dog. I remind myself, I at least, have someone to bicker with all day long. Unless I let him have the car. I can stay

**00:17:15 Laura**

home and dream and watch the water rise and fall with the tide. I can be thankful the monstrous fir that floats astride the slack, that's as long as the ferry, doesn't hit our bulkhead and smash our ladder into [unintelligible] bits. I admit I'm thankful for my nice warm house when the sky is gray and the rain hits the metal roof like fuselage of bullets. I tried to imagine sunshine and beach time at Playa Del Carmen, but awake from my daydream to my cranky spouse. He must be tired of my naggy jabs and my saggy flesh. I'm thankful he's not my friend's spouse, who has back pain and his doctors don't seem to realize he has cancer unless proven otherwise. I try hard to remember, love, to be love, to emanate love instead of nasty. Maybe tomorrow, I won't read the news. I'll radiate sunshine and elevate all around me so we can beam down on those around us and spread much-needed joy."

**00:18:31 Peggy**

I don't think you guys are reading enough. I want to hear more from all you. I'm going to talk to make you do a second round. Thank you. I got to write down that line. I love that: 'long walks with a borrowed dog,' It kind of defines a certain sort of loneliness. Okay, Our next reader is Suzanne Tedesco. Suzanne hails from the East Coast, but has set down roots in the Northwest. Over the years, she produced documentaries for PBS and community radio for NPR, authored a guidebook for voters, conducted cross-cultural research and coordinated The Community Change initiative. Since retiring, she has penned a screenplay and is currently completing her first novel. I am so planning to retire after this. Welcome Suzanne.

**00:19:25 Suzanne**

Thank you. Thank you. Okay, Let's see here. I'm going to read "Sky School." [Reading] "The pandemic rages on, police reform legislation has stalled in Congress, and two teenagers were shot this morning in the Occupy Seattle protest on Capitol Hill. Yet a bright light in the form of a small child is drawing me

**00:19:53 Suzanne**

out of my gloom and teaching me oodles along the way. Since the first of June, when our son-in-law returned to work after two months of paternity leave, Bill and I have spent Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with Sky, our three-year-old grandson. In late February, our daughter, who works full time from home while juggling the demands of their four-month old, pulled Sky out of his Spanish Immersion preschool, after chatting with a dad, picking up his own child. COVID-19 had just erupted in a nursing home on Seattle's east side and this dad was an ER doctor in the hospital, serving those infected. Rather than send Sky back to preschool, which remained open to serve children of essential workers, Bill, Poppy, and I, Oma, offered to conduct Sky School. While I've never formally taught young children, I was determined to create a loose structure and engage his curiosity and eagerness with learning activities. To bone up, I ordered a couple books with preschool teaching ideas, but they never arrived, leaving me

### **00:20:58 Suzanne**

to create experiential learning activities on the fly. Monday 8:45am Sky waits on the porch steps with mask, mini backpack and some tiny items in hand. Each day begins with outdoor exploration in our West Seattle neighborhood. With playgrounds now closed, we walk in the forest on the beach or along residential streets noting giant trees, dead end signs and fairy gardens as guideposts. Sometimes we snake through trails at Camp Long on foot, or I sprint to keep up as Sky rides his strider toward a favored destination, the climbing wall where he sets down the strider to clamber up the steep stone rise. Sky loves flowers. Now on our walks, he remembers both the names of flower we taught him over a year ago. 'Papi, look at that foxglove!' and factoids I may have forgotten. 'Don't touch those, Oma.' He points to a euphorbia, 'they have poison in them.' Ever since infancy Sky has seemingly needed to hold something in his hand at all times, Even at night, as he's tucked into bed. I figure It's

### **00:22:10 Suzanne**

a 21st century version of a blankie, since loose bedding for babies is currently considered hazardous. Now that he's older, he'll agree to put the object in his pocket if he needs to use both hands. On a recent walk, one sparkling Lincoln Park morning, the object he carried was a tiny mirror. Bill showed him how to catch a ray of light and shine it as a signal. For the rest of the walk, Sky practiced illuminating patches of ground or shooting beams into the canopy of trees. On a similarly bright morning, We notice that tiny daisy-like posies have opened where morning sun breaks through while those in shade still curl up and sleep. Oftentimes something we encounter on our walk will suggest an art or craft activity for later in the day. The wing-like seed pods from under the big leaf maple. Samaras, Sky teaches me the word, would make wonderful wings for little creatures. We have forked sticks, peeled strips of bark, cedar berries and clumps of moss to the collection container that I always

### **00:23:14 Suzanne**

carry with me now. That afternoon, we made tiny fairy dolls. When we get back to our house, I asked him to choose a letter of the day. 'B! I want B,' he says. Okay, B It is. As Bill prepares lunch I scurry around to gather small objects from around the house. A ball, a bat bowl and a bottle, A book, a bird, a basket and a bucket. A banana and a bear. For a scavenger hunt. I make a list numbering the items, one through ten, with the word and a crude drawing for each. Hide them in the front yard and set him loose. Once, after a spate of rain and wind, we deadhead blooms from the red geranium on our porch and notice our hands are oily. Wondering what other blossoms might make natural dyes, we set off through the neighborhood together. Moist down petals, purple roodies, more geraniums, buttercups and dandelions, corn flowers, roses and lithidora back at our art table. Sky smooshes them one by one onto watercolor paper to make an abstract painting for his mom. After lunch. It's time for a story.

### **00:24:27 Suzanne**

In Frog and Toad, the friends make a list and then cross off each completed task. Like Frog and Toad, Sky and I make a list of what we've done so far, and scribe Sky crosses each off. Then I add to

the list: 'take a nap, play, have a snack, tend the garden, go home, have dinner, go to bed.' When he wakes up, he grabs a pencil and strikes 'take a nap.' 'Afternoon playtime' after building a tower, then knocking down a dozen plastic cups and staggered rows for an improvised round of bowling Sky finds in the Toy Bin, a tiny metal disc from a small truck. 'What's this?' He asks. 'A hubcap.' We talked about hubcaps. How some cars have all four, others not, but they're not essential for the wheels to work. We go outside to check our cars for missing hubcaps. But now he is obsessed. He needs to check each car in the next three blocks, all four wheels, for missing hubcaps. Our walk turns into a hubcap identification and counting exercise. Now, I can describe a variety of wheel coverings for Subaru, Hondas and Jetas.

**00:25:41 Suzanne**

Who knows, maybe when my preschool teaching days are over, I can become a car mechanic." Thank you.

**00:25:50 Peggy**

I want everybody to keep going. And what more Sky School. We should be so lucky. It makes me almost regret my days as a parent, you know, that I was trying to do other things. I do get to be a grandparent. I'll try. Yes, I'll just concentrate on nothing else. Next I'd like to welcome Tyson Greer. And Tyson has been the point person in organizing this. So I want to thank her again - for making this evening so simple and organized for me. So Tyson started her creative career as a painter and sculptor. Since then, she has written and directed corporate television and documentaries, taught screenwriting at the University of Washington and authored numerous magazine articles and a strategic technology book for Microsoft press. Her agent is shopping her first novel, while she completes her second. And sometimes digs up good ideas when she works in her garden. Welcome Tyson.

**00:26:56 Tyson**

Thank you. I think many of us, probably during 2020, had conversations that we hadn't had before. And maybe we need more conversations. I'm going to read: "How Do I Talk to My Sister?" [Reading] "My sister, older by two years, lives in the lovely town of Beaufort, South Carolina. I found home after experimenting with several states in the lovely town of Lake Forest Park, Washington. We are separated by distance but care deeply for each other. I wonder, since she's white and living in the South, how would she feel if someone called her a cracker. Would she feel insulted, or what? Would she shrug it off? No one has put a knee to her neck. Say their names: George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, Richard Brooks, Tatiana Jefferson, our author, Stephen Clark. I remember reading that people can't remember more than seven items in a list. Botham Jean, Philandro Castile, Alton Sterling, Michelle Cusseaux, Freddie Gray. My sister and I spent our early childhood in a tidy Baltimore row house up

**00:28:17 Tyson**

the street from wbal-tv, where Oprah got her start. When my sister was 11 and I was 9, our family moved to the white burbs. We share blond hair, blue eyes, a love for gardening and cooking. And we are sometimes a continent a part in our views. Recently, my sister told me more police officers are shot and killed by Blacks than police officers kill African-Americans. I admit, data is murky. Some



agencies don't report different departments, record data differently. Is it shootings only, or taser deaths, beating deaths, chokehold deaths or knee-on-neck deaths? Say their names, Jenny Chiffonville, Eric Garner, Akai Gurley, Gabriella Narvaez. 'What do you think about Black people killing police?' My sister asked. I agreed, killing was wrong. In 2019, 48 police officers were killed as a result of felonious acts, 13 during criminal investigations, 9 during tactical situations and 5 in unprovoked attacks during crimes in progress and so on. FBI Uniform Crime reporting programs in the same year of

**00:29:42 Tyson**

the 1002 deaths at the hands of law enforcement, 250- that's twenty-five percent- are Black. Blacks make up of only 13 percent of the US population. The Washington Post. Say their names out loud: Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Tomenasha Anderson. Black men and boys risk death by police at the rate of 96 out of a hundred thousand. White men and boys- thirty nine out of a hundred thousand. Proceedings of the National Academies of Science Study, 2019. My sister is a good person. Once a week. She read stories to a preschool class of predominantly Black children. But the problem with my sister and me is more than inhabiting separate coasts. It's that we inhabit worlds defined by different truths and separate views of reality. Jacob Lake, Trayvon Martin. Do the math. 8 minutes 46 seconds. I feel my chest tighten. So many names to say."

**00:30:58 Peggy**

Thank you, Tyson.

**00:31:05 Peggy**

Let's see. It's always hard for me, because I'm a listener who has to respond and yet carry on. So a moment of silence isn't at all inappropriate here for all the names that we've heard and haven't heard. No, because you're right, There are many who aren't reported.

**00:31:28 Peggy**

Okay, our next reader is Marianne Gonzalez, and she describes her career as a delicious box of chocolates. While my five children finished High School, I completed my psychology degree. I was lucky enough to work and volunteer at nonprofit organizations always in the areas of education, physical and emotional health. Sounds like your description of a box of chocolates. I can't wait to hear more. Marianne. Marianne, welcome.

**00:32:08 Marianne**

Thank you very much.

**00:32:13 Marianne**

This was written on March 26,2020. "It was COVID." [Reading] "It was COVID that sent me into lockdown. It was COVID that provided a way to survive. My daughter Casey started me down this path. She brought me a pattern for a mask. She said, her neighbor, a nurse, did not have enough n95 masks in the hospital. They were wearing cloth masks on top to lengthen the time they could wear their n95. Casey brought me material. And I had elastic. Soon, we had two hospitals for whom we



were sewing masks to supplement the official supply. It was shocking and scary to me that our hospitals were so unprepared. Where was the oversight that should be in place for this kind of emergency? Soon for the family and friends that became clear, that we also needed masks to protect ourselves and others. Casey continued to bring me fabric. I was begged for more from friends and relatives. A request had been made. Anyone who could please make 100 masks. There was no way I was be able to make that huge number. But just to goad

**00:33:44 Marianne**

myself into trying, I began a tally of how many left my sewing room. March 24, 2020 I began a week-long count. 16. The original pattern marked. Well, we tried out better designs. It was clear the original design did not hold the material snugly around the nose. We found a supply of coded wire in the garden supply at Fred Meyer. It was the best we could do at the time, but woefully inadequate as the wires twisted and poked the world of masks was evolving. And soon we had aluminium nose bridges.

**00:34:34 Marianne**

We could order fabric online and have it delivered. Amazing how different fabric looks on a small screen. Being devoted to books, it is nearly impossible for me to pass one of the three little libraries. And I always peak in. It was nearly cartoonish. A light went on in my head. What a great distribution venu. I have had very few really great ideas in my life, but this was one. Now, every day I take from 6 to 10 masks to the little box with the homeowners approval, of course. And so far after 52 days, every day the box was empty. As a side bonus, I sometimes find little thank you notes. And occasionally a monetary contribution. I have chosen to be anonymous. So the notes are often addressed to mask maker. I kind of like the title. Kind of Lone Ranger-ish. So in the time of COVID, I know I am filling a need and being part of the solution. I am grateful to have a job. It keeps me busy and allows me to go to combat the sadness that seems to blow in on the breeze." Thank you.

**00:36:07 Marianne**

I want to show you the book.

**00:36:12 Peggy**

Yeah, we need more people showing the book.

**00:36:16 Beth**

Here you go. Marianne made all those masks.

**00:36:20 Peggy**

Marianne. I do know I know you and I have one of your masks. I am positive, Yes. And I know that little free public library, and I did leave money, And it's my favorite mask. In fact, if I didn't love the idea that I haven't been masked on here, I'd put it on. But what an amazing coincidence. Sometimes I couldn't find the street, and I'd lead people back. Likewise, My husband's favorite mask. And then I saw when you improved your pattern. And when I started making my own and if I'd known, I would have been giving you tons of fabric.

**00:37:08 Peggy**

You see it was COVID. It's a small world, and it's gotten connected. I think the people who needed to connect during this time have found ways to connect. So I'm delighted. Well, we come around to Jane who first introduced us tonight. Jane is a native of Kentucky who has made the Pacific Northwest her home since 1979 through a 20-year career in Hospital Administration. She found her way to Harborview Medical Center In 2015. She retired from Seattle University after years of writing professionally, She is enjoying her foray, lovely word, into creative writing. Welcome Jane.

**00:37:54 Jane**

So, as you heard, we're in the process of reprinting the book. And they asked us for an update. 600 words we each got to write about something significant that happened in 2021. So I'm going to give you a little preview of what's coming. This is called "Stepping Out" [Reading] "2021. As Joe and Kamala Bring welcome change. As vaccines go into arms and as soggy winter days slip into spring, the heavy blanket of

**00:38:30 Jane**

2020 grief begins to lift. In March, my pandemic partner Nick and I move into a tiny rental house in Langley on Whidbey Island. It was my fourth move of the year. We begin to see his grandchildren more frequently in April, My daughter, Katie, got two shots, and we hug and cry. By May mask mandates are in flux around the country. Schools and libraries open up. Restaurants offer indoor dining. Is it safe to travel? I talked to my brother Joe in Santa Fe and we conjure up a visit. I want to explore parts of the Southwest. And I'm thinking we have to drive. Joe says, fly to Albuquerque plan, a slow drive to Salt Lake City and fly home. We decide to fly. Anticipation is part of the fun of any trip. But this time planning is fraught with anxiety. Am I ready to crack open our safe Pandemic Cocoon to re-enter the world to be in three states for national parks you two airports? I plan anyway and Nick says yes to every adventure I proposed. Okay, we do it. Take the ferry to Seattle, Leave the

**00:39:56 Jane**

dog with friends. Drive to Seatac. Fly to Albuquerque. Rent a car drive to Santa Fe. Seamless. No long lines anywhere. Everyone wears a mask. Is it my imagination? Or is the general public more kind-hearted than in pre-pandemic times? Now, back home in Langley, we relive our adventure through Nick's two thousand photographs, and the memory dining outdoors in Santa Fe's trademark restaurants, cliff dwellings of the ancestral Pueblo society with their architectural brilliance, and focus on community, days of deep blue sky with pasted on clouds, miles and miles of rocks whose shapes and colors reflect eons of erosion into arches, canyons and otherworldly formations. So much magnificence. So different from Pacific Northwest splendor, The highlight of the experiences: people. My brother and his wife Mary, show us their new home in the hills of Santa Fe. We visit, my dear friend, Louise, who lost her husband John last year, and Posey whose husband's health is declining. While she prepares to host

**00:41:21 Jane**

a son's wedding at their home with the bride's family who refuses to be vaccinated, They all remind me of the importance of showing up and of hugs. No number of Zoom experiences can substitute for

hugs. These are the people. I know casual interactions with new people are richer. After a shelter-in-place year, the woman taking a selfie in front of Art and Arch of antlers at the entrance of Georgia O'keeffe's Ghost Ranch. Nick takes her photograph, and she exudes her love for the artist's work. Seven women have lunch at the Abiquiu Inn in New Mexico and plan A group painting exhibit. They remind me of the seven of us and this beloved writing group. I remember a man doing a downward facing dog in the early morning on a rock in Arches National Park, The woman from Chicago who we encounter throughout our day at Canyonlands and her contagious Joy at being there, the family from Michigan, who shared their picnic table with us as they explore Utah with five children ages 1 to 10. The climax is a young

**00:42:41 Jane**

man who runs a thousand feet up to the top of a massive Red Boulder near the iconic Delicate Arch in Arches National Park. He waves his arms and yells just surprised onlookers below. We cheer in response as if all gathered are celebrating, being healthy being outside in a sacred place, because we can." Thank you.

**00:43:13 Peggy**

Well, thank you all for stepping out with us tonight. So I hope everyone who's joined us since the very beginning of this reading tonight is aware that this book is going to be a new addition, and that you should go to any and all book stores, because many will special order it for you in addition to the ones where it's scary, and that they've already raised \$3500 for literacy. See, because of the sales of this "Writing While Masked." So unless anyone would like to do, if there's anything else you wish you would still like to read, I'd love to open this up to questions from the audience. I know that I want to know how you guys first came together to write. And feel free. Any members of the the writing group here to to unmute yourself to answer, What's your common thread? Was there was an invitation where you add a class? Did you work together? How did this all begin?

**00:44:20 Suzanne**

I think it's sort of began with in twos and twos, where I think Beth and Marianne were in a class together, and Laura and I had been had taken some classes together And around the same time talked about. And Laura knew, Beth, Soon we all talked about. Well, maybe we ought to get a writing group together, And that was the beginning about 10 years ago, I think, Is that the way you remember it?

**00:44:52 Beth**

Kind of organic, actually. Yeah. We, we started out sort of quite formally and then gave that up after bit. And so we meet at each other's homes, And we're expected to provide some carrot sticks, but not much more. And what we do is read our pieces and have people tell us what they like and what they don't like. And it's worked.

**00:45:20 Peggy**

Did you write? Would you be writing beforehand when you bring pieces to share a right while you were together?

**00:45:26 Beth**

No, we always brought it with us.

**00:45:28 Peggy**

Hmm, Got it. Okay.

**00:45:31 Suzanne**

We sort of had a going thing that you could bring up to five pages, and then read it and then ask for critique. And then a couple of years ago, We shifted realizing that some are. Some of us are writing long-form pieces and to do five pages of a long-form peace and not hear something for a week, It can sometimes, you know, lose the flow so that if anybody was either wrestling with a certain part, or just kind of wanted to get a take on a bigger piece, they could ask for more time at the meeting. we meet for two hours, And then you can read more and preferably send it a couple of days ahead. So people would have time to read it and think about it. So they wouldn't have to just respond on the spot.

**00:46:14 Beth**

It's quite lovely having a poet in the group, because Laura has taught us so much about poetry. And she's been on this on this journey about about poetry's published quite a lot now, and we say things like, we don't understand that. And she says, well, you're not supposed to, or you're supposed to think about yourself, or things like there. So we've become a lot more tolerant of poetry.

**00:46:44 Beth**

And Been persuaded Wanda to start writing around to correct?

**00:46:49 Wanda**

Correct. This group... well Jane and I came in together back to what Susie was saying about 2 by 2 by 2 is like Noah's writing group. [Laughs] Noah's Arc writing group.

**00:47:03 Wanda**

And Jane and I came in together back in 2019. It was January 2019. And we were both invited. I was invited by Laura because we're also in a walking... ladies walking group downtown and I needed some help to move some pieces I've been working on. Moving a book I've been working on forward. And Laura was kind enough to invite me to this wonderful writing group she's a part of. And now I can say, is my writing group as well? So thanks again to Laura.

**00:47:39 Peggy**

Collectives are wonderful things. I think, you know, something I believe in is that writers... the myth of writing alone. Please don't go there. Writers need other writers, Just whether it's a writing partner as a walking partner or a support group, or just somebody who knows and cares that you're there. So I'm also curious once you decided to do an anthology, how did that... was that as organic? How did that change? You know, the working structure of... you know, it's obviously a shift from your regular writing work, you know, meetings. So how did that proceed?

**00:48:22 Beth**

It was sort of organic. And because we were each doing these little pieces, which was therapeutic, and then Jane came back and said, we better put this into this. You know, we should be doing this. We are doing it. We need to keep doing it. We need to keep doing it better. And then suddenly, it just sort of seemed to make sense to put it into a book. So it was a bit like top seed. It grew. We had the... we had the format. And and the book came together as with contributions from every single one of us. I did the I did initial formatting. Tyson spent hours, putting it together, Jane handled the finances. And and Laura did a lot of the publicity, everybody that everybody did something. And so it just it's really is a group effort. It's not. It's not someone's baby, it's everybody's.

**00:49:22 Suzanne**

You don't often get seven women producing a baby. But this was really remarkable.

**00:49:28 Beth**

Yeah, it was. So let's kind of magic, actually.

**00:49:33 Peggy**

And did you get to have a book launch somewhere? How is your launch?

**00:49:43 Laura**

We went to bookstores and saying, please would you sell these?

**00:49:48 Wanda**

And also, you know, our friends, we're all connected to many different groups of friends. And it just once again, back to Beth. It was just an organic... the group, to charged me with writing a marketing plan, which was really based on my background, from years and years of work, doing those kind of like dreadful ones. This was like a real fun one. And and everybody just, you know, just came on board and marketed our book to our family. And our friends. We also gave we gifted our books to people who are special in our lives. And that was a wonderful thing to do, Because for me, some people didn't know that I had picked up writing creatively again versus writing for corporate America. So it was all good. And that's what this book... that's what this book represents for me. personally. It's a push in a different direction post-retirement. And it's nice to see the other side of your personality. And this group are writing group encourages you to step out and try something new.

**00:51:05 Marianne**

We also decided, because we didn't think of this as being sort of a very commercial thing, necessarily. But we decided that we wanted to give whatever we made. I think Jane said this in her introduction to a nonprofit that we really felt had some heart. And and we decided on literacy source. And I think that was a really nice piece for all of us because it made, at least for me. It felt like, you know, it wasn't just a self-indulgent sort of self-publishing thing, but it was really a way to give back. I mean, we had the privilege of getting him having an education and being literate, and to be able to use some of the proceeds to give back to people who have been less fortunate.

**00:51:59 Jane**

We really like the fact that part of literary sources focus is on immigrants. Eighty-six percent of their work goes toward immigrant populations. And in 2020, as was very obvious. And the four years four years, three years before that, immigrants could use a break.

**00:52:18 Peggy**

Laura, were you going to add anything?

**00:52:22 Laura**

It was interesting that during this group, I started writing poetry. We all came with the project that we were. Look, we're all actually started with a fictionalized project, except one who came a little later. And I started writing fiction. And the piece I was working on was too much related to an actual event that was happened that it started going over the border into HIPAA. You know, where confidentiality may actually might actually be breached. And at that point, I'd also been thinking about doing a memoir, and I started to just naturally write. Start writing poems about what my life was like, Medical School, feminism, growing up with a radical family, and, you know, and then my love for the outdoors and biology and nature, And that when I made that transition, this group was patient enough to let me work through that and learn with me as I took lots of courses and learn more and more about poetry,

**00:53:40 Laura**

which I actually didn't wasn't very much interested in before, and really didn't have time for before I finished, you know, before I ended my medical career, although that's never really over, because it's such a part of you. But anyway, yeah. So that's so, the group is just been, really It's good to have a group, because you have a deadline. And our group, I think, is unusual in that we meet every week. So you've gotta be doing something every week. And that keeps you in the writing creative mind.

**00:54:12 Suzanne**

I think, also creating the essays has been here working on a long-form piece along, you know, a novel there were just some days where it was Just great to take a break from characters, and, you know, the conflict and the resolution of the scene and just write an essay and then look at the next day. And and it was just a nice, a nice change of pace. Sometimes we sort of clear your head almost like a palate cleanser, you might say.

**00:54:42 Peggy**

Love the diversity of experience that you bring. That's one of the things that strikes me about your anthology is that it isn't that you all were writing from like the same place at all. And you were in different genres. So I think that probably adds a real richness to it as well. So and I love that you sort of said palate cleanser, because I love that. I love that idea. And I thought, I had heard you say, weekly and I thought, did I hear right? Right? You were we meeting weekly. That's that's a commitment that very few are willing to make.

**00:55:18 Jane**

We didn't want you to feel like you had to bring something, but you had the opportunity. And and there may be something you're working on, that it takes some time, you know, for that chapter or that poem to really resolve. And so it wasn't a requirement, but it was an opportunity that when you were ready that you could bring it into the group and get some independent feedback. And we all learned the technology got on Zoom calls. I don't know how many. Many, many. And it really was a wonderful thing to stay connected, The only way we could and we did. And that first meeting when we met in Marianne's backyard in person.

**00:56:04 Peggy**

Wow, you're back in person.

**00:56:07 Wanda**

You know, one of the things I want to say, because it's very important to me about this group. We all bring different experiences to the table, life experiences that we can share. You know, I have learned so many medical terms from Laura. You know, you got to get out of doggone dictionary when you read some of the points. But that's okay. I'm you know, I'm a lifelong learner. Thank you, Dr. Laura. And then especially, especially during these difficult times, I've been able to explain, not Black people, but how things affect me as one African-American woman and why my experience reflects my view of the world. And that's been good to be able to share that. And I've also learned about the experiences my co-writers have had has rounded out me and as a person, as a person. I just can't say that enough. It's enriched my life.

**00:57:22 Peggy**

Lovely. So I'd like to just let you our listeners know about what's coming up. And then if people in we're still areas within the audience, When asked questions, we can do that. And certain point I'll stop the recording. So we can really let our hair down and find out find out what the find out. Some other stories that didn't get included. In August will be welcoming Asia Renee, who's a poet and artist. And a member of the African American Writers Alliance, and will also be welcoming. Laura Tarah saw who I believe is watching here tonight. She did open mic last month, I believe. And I said, oh, you must come back. And then two people who I got acquainted with one reacquainted in one newly acquainted with during a lovely Hedge Brook opportunity. I know some of you are familiar with Hedge Brook, and when they reopened after their COVID hiatus, they opened for local writers. There is a different arrangement, sort of a pay-as-you-go. I could never. I was never accepted Hedge Brook except as a paying member, and it was

**00:58:34 Peggy**

absolutely wonderful. So I got reacquainted there with Marjorie Austerehaus who's doing a wonderful today in Salem as though kind of a you are there back in Salem, Massachusetts during the witch trials and a young woman named Marlena Williams, who is doing fascinating project Spoiler alert, it kind of has to do with that movie The Exorcist and her mother. It's a memoir. And then I would just like to, in the spirit of you know, the gifts of COVID once again, share the quilt behind me, which was a gift from my Cancer Lifeline writers that was presented to me during COVID as a prize. And there's one of the



will be one of the most treasured possessions of my life. So, I have been fortunate to have seen many silver linings during this time. So I'm now going to end the recording. I want to invite all of you to come back and read another time of your first time members. Just mark your calendar. I've even made it on Zoom so that you can pre-register for all the next kind of readings. If you are

**00:59:47 Peggy**

each of you who are been writing, you know, talking about what you're doing, You're next, It's hundred words, or a different genre that wasn't shared. I hope that all of you in the 7 writers Northwest will not be strangers. You can find all of our events on a Facebook. It's About Time Writers Reading Series page, as well as when this has been edited, It will be available for viewing on the It's About Time Writers Reading Series YouTube and a podcast on The Seattle Public Library site. And if you have any questions, just, you know, find the weird name Peggy Sturtevant and contact me about reading or scheduling. So I will stop the recording. But thank you all for coming, and feel free to keep chat.