

Women On Quilts' Creative Writing Challenge



**CHANGING TIMES:
WOMEN'S STORIES 1902 – 1942**

Title Page

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CHANGING TIMES: WOMEN'S STORIES 1902-1942

Compiled by Kimberly Wulfert, PhD

Kimberly Wulfert Publishing, Ojai, California, 2009

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Women On Quilts sponsored this Challenge to raise funds for *The Quilters Hall of Fame*, in Marion Indiana, former home of Marie Webster and her quilt kit company *Practical Patchwork*, for their triple anniversary celebration of women and quilt history to take place in July 2009.

Credits and Icon

Many thanks and much appreciation to the women who helped to make this eBook possible. Their talents or photos are sprinkled throughout the book, bringing beauty to the finished product and facilitating my vision. Bless you all for your support of this project.

Delaine Gately for making the collage on the cover and for the “sewing circle” photo below
 Janice Phelps for the cover graphic www.janicephelps.com
 Judy Breneman for the icon graphic www.womenfolk.com
 Jayne Maker for the apple pie baking photo www.barefootkitchenwitch.com
 Susan Wildemuth for photos of her textiles: an embroidered “Victory” quilt block, and a quilt made for the Century of Progress at the Chicago World's Fair www.illinoisquilthistory.com
 Karen B. Alexander, Past President of The Quilters Hall of Fame, <http://thequiltershalloffame.blogspot.com/> and <http://karenquilt.blogspot.com/>



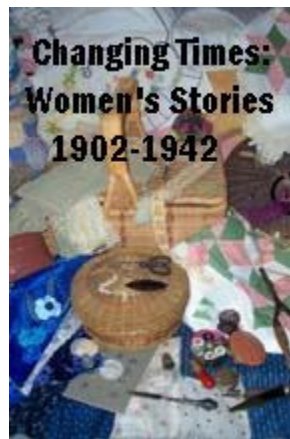
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Introduction

Why a Creative Writing Challenge

by Kimberly Wulfert

The seed for this story challenge came to me in February while the economy was crashing. President Obama had been in office about thirty days and the economy wasn't turning around as fast as the public used to being instantly gratified wanted. In other words, reality was setting in, with depression on its back. Talk of the Great Depression, comparisons to now, and threats of more jobs lost and bank closings led me to wax nostalgic for times past, even if only in my imagination.

Old movies, books and family discussions about daily life during the Great Depression and the two World Wars tell of families working together and making do. They tell of joys found in simple things, nature, and being with others in community. Practically the entire population was working together, living up to their name of United States, to rebuild the country for the common good of all the people.

I imagined people gathered around huge floor radios to listen to the fireside chats from President Roosevelt or seeing reflections of our military on European battlefields in movie theaters as the prelude to a movie, an affordable luxury. When I imagine future generations thinking back to our times, I envision them reflecting on people, often alone, in front of their computer monitors and cell phones to get updates about current events from our government and the world.

Quite by coincidence, my personal goal at that same time was to re-awaken the right hemisphere of my brain, to create some new art forms with regularity and feed my imagination and daydreams. Talk about poor timing!

The avenue of expression that allowed me to stay both current on the country's state of being and engage my right hemisphere more than my left was journaling. Through journaling, I could write about my feelings on anything that was currently going on, create new ideas and daydreams, reflect on nature and my experiences, as I wrote in longhand on my paper. Journaling also provided a release for stressful feelings. It was easy, unlike trying to be creative with paper, or fabric or beading. Stress, anxiety and creativity cancel each other out. Journaling offers a viable alternative for both.

Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Helen Keller would second that notion, so who was I to say otherwise, my right hemisphere said to my left. The left brain was kicking and screaming as I read and wrote fiction, stacking my history and non-fiction books in the corner. This was not an easy *habit* to change; I adore history, antique quilts and non-fiction, but I persevered and found in time that my left brain was benefitting from the additional input from the once atrophied right brain. Signs appeared in my daily life that showed me my writing, reading and creating were enhanced, and I was more prolific and less stressed at the end of the day.

Now I was delving into art forms I was previously convinced I could not do, like drawing faces and scenes. I pulled hand dyed and ultra modern fabrics from my stash to form them into fabric

wall hangings containing messages or symbolism. Fancier cooking became fun (at times) as I pulled out cookbooks from the upper dark cupboard, where they were hiding since I bought them. My camera became a Hallmark store as I made greeting cards, using photos I took and computer altered. My soul was filling with joy. My imagination was leading the way. Writing for no purpose other than what I felt like writing about at the moment was my corner stone. This creative approach to life felt so rich and freeing compared to my predominantly left brain focused life several months earlier.

This brought to mind many research studies conducted over the years that show that mental imagery, expressing stress-filled thoughts and feelings through journaling and engaging in the creative arts all help to dramatically reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and bolster the immune system and our health.

It has been a strange time for America; a powerful time of change in our lives and around the globe. We are in unfamiliar togetherness, like I imagine it was in the tumultuous first half of the 20th century. That era also brought about more women going to work outside the home, caused electricity, indoor plumbing, cars and phones to become more widely available, and families scattered around the country, whether by choice or by necessity.

When I think about those times, feelings of sadness are evoked in me. Yet, I also feel the sense of community, love, purpose, and the common desire for peace and a reunited family that people experienced. I imagine women helping women, feeling a new freedom of self-expression as they went to work and made decisions as head of household, while their husbands went to war or died or left them, with the children, for another woman. I imagine grandparents moving in, taking care of children, mending and cooking for those needing assistance in the neighborhood as well. I imagine girls and boys discovering each other, getting married, having babies, and building memories in their new homes with their Brownie cameras and heirloom quilts.

My soul was filling with joy. My imagination was leading the way. My desire to write was calling to me morning, noon and night, and I answered by writing. In meditation, writing was flashing across my mind as if to say, *keep it up*. My soul also heard the soul cries and fears of strangers and friends, and the urge to do something to transformative came mind in the form of this Creative Writing Challenge.

It further took shape because March was around the corner. Nationally, we honor Women's History, Crafts, and Quilting Day in the month of March. Having a coinciding fundraiser for The Quilter's Hall of Fame was a natural progression in my mind. TQHF originated in the imagination of quilter, collector and now appraiser, Hazel Carter, who desired to recognize women past and present, by honoring their quilt-related contributions as artists, authors, entrepreneurs, collectors, curators, educators, designers and teachers, in an annual celebration. Donations raised by this Challenge could help to support that cause this year, I thought.

Speaking of honoring women, let me introduce the three amazing women who each write about women needleworkers of yesterday in American history who served as the Challenge Tasters (judges): Tracy Jamar, Karen Porter and Susan Wildemuth. I asked each woman to write about their experience of the stories, their finalist choices and a little bit on the place of writing in their own life. Their thoughts, in their words will follow the stories.

The Finalists

Reading the stories sent in by women across America, I was swept away and filled with a spectrum of emotions. My right and left hemispheres were firing away as I pictured the scenes in my mind from the words on the page. I was spellbound, brought to tears, laughing, learning, all the while feeling an intimacy with the authors and the women they depicted. I felt my soul filling with joy.

Congratulations to our three finalists. The tasters agreed that the story which fit the guidelines the best was written by Rita Larom for *Maizie's Hope*. Two tasters chose the same story as their personal favorite, *Thinking Back...*, by Maretta Miller, and the other taster's choice was *Elizabeth's Quilt Challenge* by Patricia J. Perry.

Maizie's Hope is presented first, with fifteen other stories arranged according to their geographic location. The first takes place in Maine, the final in Arizona. The authors sent a brief statement telling of their inspiration for the story and their motivation to enter this challenge. I placed this at the end of the book in hopes that you will read the creative stories first. Why? Because using *your* imagination matters.

My deepest gratitude to each writer who contributed their personal creations for this eBook.

It's your turn now. Which story will speak to your heart? It is with great pleasure that I present

Changing Times: Women's Stories 1902-1942.

Kimberly Wulfert
Ojai, California
May 20, 2009

Maizie's Hope

by Rita Larom

It was the embrace of two women who understood. Maizie had been working on this quilt for almost twenty-five years but hadn't shown it to Sunny until today when she spread it across the bed. "It's the story of your brothers and sisters," Maizie said. "You're old enough now to learn about that awful time. The quilt will help.

"Hannah has the most pieces 'cause she was the oldest." Maizie had placed ivory colored blocks diagonally. They were cut from babies' clothing and her own wedding dress, a 1905 fashion she'd restyled until it no longer fit. "Hannah come a couple years after your Papa and I married. Oh, you'd a-laughed if you'd seen her all tangled up in the pea patch pulling stubborn flowers off the vines. She kept little bouquets in a tin cup all summer long. By the time she was ten, she was a big help in the garden. We was mighty tired of beans and salt pork when spring come and we could eat fresh."

Sunny stood quietly, her arm around her mother, her eyes bright with silent tears.

"James was a year behind Hannah and was Pa's right hand. He loved corn—growing it, chasin' birds from it, feedin' it to pigs, eatin' it. That's why I embroidered those corn stalks right up each side of the pea vines and roses I put there for Hannah."

"And little rows of yellow knots make corn kernels," Sunny said.

"I nearly run us out of kerosene for the lamp when I did them. Stitchin' peas and corn and everything right over the blocks seemed the best way. The material's from the tails of your Papa's shirts and the good parts of James's clothes. Feel them. I scrubbed those things on the washboard with lye soap so many times they are as soft as satin."

"Where did you get the pink cloth?" Sunny asked.

"Mrs. Wright give me a dress she couldn't wear no more so I cut squares from it for Lizzie. She prized chickens. Them new hatched little downy balls settled right down in her hands, she was so gentle with 'em. Seven years old." Maizie paused. "I was real happy to get the chicks on the quilt to fuzz up like that."

Sunny traced violets her mother had stitched on lavender fabric. "I got that for Linda from Sears and Roebuck. They delivered. I used butter and egg money to keep Linda in Crayons and paper, and her only four."

"The lambs are beautiful," Sunny said.

"I fluffed 'em with candlewick. That's indigo blue I put in the corners for William. He was just talkin' real good when it happened. The beads, your Aunt Grace give me. Make nice stars, don't they?"

Maizie had centered the quilt with a large block with "HOPE" embroidered across it. Sunflowers meandered through the letters.

"That section I added for you, like you're always wrapped in the arms of your brothers and sisters. Remember that."

Sunny choked, "Thank you."



Maizie continued, "We could've talked sooner but your Papa and I wanted to wait until you was eighteen. We wanted you to be a happy child. You know, we'd went to the city—just had a wagon then—to see your Aunt Grace. She was terrible sick. And Papa had to register for the draft. The war against the Kaiser was something awful. I was scared he might have to fight.

"Grandma Powell always wanted the children to stay with her so we let 'em. On the way home, I was happy about Grace gettin' better. Then I saw the smolderin' ruins. An awful fear clutched me. I barely understood what people was sayin'. It was the smoke ... they was overcome ... probably didn't suffer ... awful tragedy ... all five of 'em. Few days later, Grandma died, too."

Maizie had felt numb until flaring edges of pain sliced their way into her being, then shut down just before the agony became unbearable. People came, left food, did the wash, harvested orchard and garden. Some looked at her with pity, others murmured a greeting and turned away. Words hung dead in the air. "After a while, only Mrs. Wright still come to see me. Most of the time we just sat and rocked, there was nothin' to say. Pa was always workin'. Never talked."

Winter came, and spring, then it was summer again. "Mrs. Wright told me her daughter was gettin' married. That set me to thinkin' about making a gift for the wedding," Maizie said. "Finally my mind was on somethin' else, if only for a few minutes. I did some cross stitches on some kitchen towels."

Gradually Maizie's needlework filled painful places in her mind. She surprised her neighbors with a little gift here, another offering there. She started the quilt. When nostalgia overcame her, she could chase the blues with a little needle and thread visit with her children. Fancy work had always been her calling. Cut work paraded around table linens, ribbon roses flowered down the fronts of dresses, artful stitch samplings hid the seams between crazy quilt blocks and delicate lace trimmed collars and handkerchiefs.

"I thought I'd have no more children," Maizie told Sunny. "Here I was, forty years old when you arrived. I give you another name, but light come right through the curtains and turned you all golden. 'Sunny,' I said. I swear you answered." Sunny smiled and met her mother's eyes in the same way she had as an infant, like she carried a secret from beyond.

"Times are easier now," said Maizie. "You go off and marry that soldier boy and we'll look for this war to end soon." Maizie helped load their little yellow coupe, gave Pa the gas ration stamps they'd saved and the couple drove their surviving child to board the train.

Waving as the train departed, Maizie knew her daughter, Hope, would never be completely gone.

Elizabeth's Quilt Challenge

by Patricia J. Perry

Predictions of a harsh winter of 1932-1933 came as more bad news during the hard times that had fallen on the small New England town of Waterford, Maine. What would later be known as The Great Depression had the entire country in its grasp and even families living off the land were struggling to survive.

Living on a farm had always been hard work, but it was a rewarding life. Summer months found women tending vegetable gardens, berry picking and canning over a wood burning stove in the middle of August, a necessity to provide the family with food during the winter. Long winter evenings were spent close to the stove while knitting, sewing and quilting.

Elizabeth had been taught to sew at an early age by her grandmother who had been a seamstress. She was inspired by natural creativity and was soon making quilts using her own designs and meticulous stitching. When she married Charles Andrews, and moved to the farm that had been in his family for generations, she brought with her the cherished needle case that had belonged to her grandmother.

Although they lived a frugal life, Elizabeth Andrews surrounded herself with beautiful things she made for her home and her loved ones; braided rugs on the wood floors, beautiful quilts on every bed and embroidered tablecloths added charm to the old farmhouse. Her cooking and sewing were like fine arts to her.

Their children wore clothes she fashioned using her skills as a seamstress. Ruffles on the straps of her daughter's jumper, or a frog embroidered on the bib of her young son's overalls were trademark examples of her special touch. Elizabeth's otherwise simple hat featured a colorful ribbon and crocheted flowers.



In September, Elizabeth noticed a sign at the local dry goods store announcing a quilt contest offering \$50 dollars as first prize. The winner would earn the opportunity to enter her quilt in the Sears Quilt Contest at the Chicago World's Fair the following year. This sparked Elizabeth's interest for several reasons; she enjoyed a challenge, she was an excellent quilter, and the family could use the money.

Elizabeth was already planning her quilt during the ride home. She had saved every pattern from the Nancy Page Quilt Club Series published in the Sunday newspaper, so that evening she searched for the pattern she had in mind. Money was tight and there was no extra to buy a large amount of fabric so she selected a pattern with lots of flowers. Her designing skill allowed her to alter the original pattern to include flowers using colors of fabric she had on hand in her scrap bag and adding more detail with intricate stitching. There would be roses from pink fabric left over from the dress she made for her daughter's first day of school, bluebells from her son's romper, and buttercups from yellow fabric for which she bartered a couple dozen eggs. The pure white background fabric was purchased with money earned by sewing a dress for her daughter's teacher.

Elizabeth's design featured an appliquéd basket of flowers with embroidered accents at the center of the quilt, and an oval pattern of laurel leaves encircling that design. An outside border of colorful flowers entwined along a vine and flowing pink ribbons gave a striking touch against the white background.

Elizabeth worked on her quilt every chance she got, sometimes staying up long after her children were tucked into bed. And all the while, she contemplated how they would use the fifty dollars if her quilt won first prize. The barn needed a new roof, her daughter wanted a violin, her son had outgrown his boots and Elizabeth wanted that first prize.

As Elizabeth worked on the quilt top, she also pondered how she would find the extra money to buy the batting and backing for her quilt. But, just a few dozen Christmas wreaths she made and sold at the local feed store gave her enough cash to purchase the necessary supplies to finish her quilt. All she needed now was time, and time was as scarce as money for a woman and her busy life on the farm.

Elizabeth worked tirelessly to complete her quilt and submitted her entry just days before the February 1 deadline. As she inspected her finished project, she was pleased with the results of her many hours spent working on the quilt made from the tiny pieces of cloth that held such precious memories of her family.

The winner of the quilt contest was to be announced after a potluck supper on Valentine's Day. After the meal the women washed and dried the dishes in record time, and Elizabeth retrieved the empty plate that had contained her mile-high custard pie and quickly took her seat in the Grange Hall.

Silence fell upon the room as the storekeeper stood before the audience with the quilt entries lining the walls behind her. She thanked each of the participants for what was deemed a most successful quilt contest and then finally announced, "The winner of the first prize and the fifty dollars is Elizabeth Andrews!"

Elizabeth stood proudly by her prize winning quilt as the others gathered around to congratulate her. The countless hours she had spent painstakingly stitching each piece of the quilt had been rewarded ten fold. The prize money was a bonus – the real reward was the heirloom quilt she would pass on to her daughter.

The Art of Apple Pie *by Miss Jordan Anderson*

The day my aunt and uncle and cousins came to live with us, I was spozed to learn my Great-Grandmama's apple pie recipe. I woke up early that morning, stoked the fire in the stove, and kept at it clear through the afternoon. I didn't want the stove not being hot enough to deter my Ma. Turns out, I had a lot more than that to worry about.

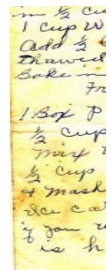
Aunt Elda and Uncle Carpenter weren't bad folks, they were just different from us. They were poor and illiterate, like most of the folk around these parts. But, they walked around like they were wearing the finest silks and had been reading by electric light since they were in diapers. So, when they landed on our doorstep after sundown with enough luggage to clothe half the holler, I was sure my Ma was going to sent them off to a neighbors, or at least put them in the shed out back to sleep. But instead, she gave them my bed, and sent me out to the shed with a thin blanket and not much else.

"It's summer. You'll be fine out there. Don't give me that look."

"But Ma! We were spozed to make great grandma-"

She yanked me outside faster than you can say "spit."

"Now you just stop right there! For one, we don't turn out family. For two, plans change. You need to learn that about life or you'll spend the rest of it in a sad situation. And for three, if you think there is any way in this life or the next I'm going to let your Aunt Elda anywhere near that recipe, you're as crazy as Uncle Lester."



That was saying something. Uncle Lester was this crazy old hermit who lived up the hill. Sometimes, he'd stand in his front yard with just his socks on, and shout down the hill, "If ya'll children don't stop looking in my windows, I'm gonna to hog tie ya all and sell ya to the gub'ment!!"

Voices carry down that hill.

Ma's first two reason shut me up, but the last one convinced me. Ma was one of the most generous women in the county, but when it came to her cookin' secrets, she had a selfish streak a mile wide. She'd started sharing them with me only after I proved I could keep a secret. She tested me for years. She'd give me some little piece of information, and if it came back to her within the week she'd send me to bed with a half a piece of bread and a hard look that spoke volumes. Eventually, I learned to keep her secrets until I thought I would burst from them. That day, I was going to learn the holy of holies-Great Grandmama's apple pie.

That is, until they showed up.

You could see the worry on Ma's face that night. Uncle Carpenter was in debt up to his eyeballs and then some from all the dress fabric and good shoes and three pound bags of candy he'd

charged. He'd got behind on his house note trying to keep the general store, and eventually the sheriff, off his back. I guess he finally lost it all. Now Ma and I had to figure out how to make two peoples worth of food into six, and keep a smile on our faces the whole time.

But you know what? Turns out, voices carry UP the hill, too. Within two days the neighbors had rounded up every spare egg, crust of bread, half a hog jowl, and scrap of blanket and descended on our little house like moths to a flame. I don't know how they all knew, but somehow they did. None of them had two pennies to rub together most days, but every family within five miles had seen or heard that we had unexpected guests, and I spoze they just figured we'd need more'n what we had.

Every night there was another knock on the door and another neighbor with a basket of something "to help keep the wolves away." My Ma would say a quiet "thank you," and invite them in for a cup of coffee. By the time the week was over I'm certain their cupboards were nearly empty because ours were embarrassingly full.



And then one afternoon Ma sent Aunt Elda and the cousins up the road to do some visitin'. Uncle Carpenter was out back making some long overdue fence repairs thanks to a bribe from my Ma of "somethin' special for dessert." She closed the front door and turned to me and, with a twinkle in her eye, said, "Now, about this pie." and for the rest of the afternoon she patiently showed me how to slice the apples just so, how to know by feel when the crust was ready to be rolled out and gently placed in the pan, and how to know by smell how much cinnamon those apples wanted.

It wasn't until years later, when I was showing my own daughter how to make that pie that I realized that my Ma had finally given me some secrets I could share. For one, you never turn away family, but you might be able to get rid of 'em for an afternoon if it's important enough. For two, plans change, and learning that early made the rest of my life a much happier situation. For three, being rich has nothing to do with having money, and it's often when you're without it at all that you realize the treasure right in your own backyard.

My Name is Sinai

by Teddy Pruett



Me and Abraham was plannin to build us a house but we'd been livin in Mizmaginn's house since we got married. Me and her never fussed nor nothin, it was more like little things I couldn't rightly pick out, but they was there, and it was uncomfortable and she didn't give me no rest. If I cooked chicken, she wanted ham. I planted Mornin Glories by the porch, and she said they'd block the air. The thing that really made me mad - and she knowed it - was she wouldn't say my name right, it was Siney this and Siney that.

It took me years to get one teensy fingernail's worth of respect from Mizmaginn and I remember when it happened clear as day.

My sister Dorcas was visitin from Macon and the three of us was piecin a quilt that I didn't much like, it was mostly blue stripes and plaids, looked too much like men's pajamas to suit me. Anyway, Dorcas was cuttin squares, and I was piecin pieces to make 'em big enough to use, and Mizmaginn was sewin 'em together. We was out on the front porch cause it was so hot, and Dorcas was just a fussin about the heat. I didn't say nothin about it, but the heat makes me cross.

Mizmaginn didn't make no secret that she didn't like Dorcas much because she graduated from the Wesleyan Female College and put on airs. The heat ain't never hurt me none, Mizmaginn told her, but Dorcas didn't pay her no mind, and decided she wanted to git some iced tea for all of us, then remembered we didn't have no ice man down here, so she fussed about that too. Mizmaginn finally asked her if she was so miserable why did she come down? And she said she had seen all the dead bodies she could stand. Everbody was happy that the big war was over, and now folks was dyin of influenza faster than they could dig holes to bury 'em in, and she said wagons drove by her house day and night filled with bodies stacked up like wood, and she just had to git away.

Dorcas asked did we have some good gossip or stories. Mizmaginn said she didn't reckon we had no stories for her, then she said Siney, meanin me, was too much of a goody two shoes to gossip. Siney don't say boo to a goose, she said. And I said, well, you don't know everthang about me, Mizmaginn, and she said she'd knowed me four years and I hadn't spoke a notable thang yet. Abe is a good son and outta respect for him I didn't say nothin to her, but I wanted to strangle the old biddy. We cain't git that house built fast enough.

Changin the subject, I said that Ruth and her twins had been to visit. Mizmaginn laughed a thin crackly laugh showin toothless gums, and said you shoulda heard the song they was sangin to Siney. They was a sangin "Siney, Siney, Shiney Hiney" and dancing round in a circle. Her laugh sounded like air bein' squeezed from shirts goin' through a wringer. I felt my face gittin' red, and I said that song was just as stupid as the other one they sang about "I had a little bird, it's name was Enza, I opened the window, and in-flu-enza!" Ain't neither of 'em funny I sez to her,

mean-like, and I don't know what possessed me, but I threw the spool of thread clear across the porch. Dorcas and Mizmaginn looked like they'd been got by lightning.

I stood up and told her I was sick and tired of her makin fun of my name. My name is Sinai! Mama got that name right out the Bible, same's you did Abraham's, and it was her present to me and I'd like some respect for it. Well, Dorcas decided right then and there to go to the outhouse, and excused herself.

I kept right on a talkin. I told Mizmaginn that I wasn't no goodie two shoes, that I got my feelins, and if she wanted to hear me say boo to a goose, I was a fixin to do it right now, and she was the goose. I told her to stop bein so mean to Dorcas, because she was prissy from the time she's borned, and she stayed right in mama's shadow, and wouldn't even get her pinny dirty. I'd go out and git my arms all scratched up pickin blackberries, and when I'd git em home, Dorcas would eat em all. I'd walk down the road more than two mile with a heavy bucket to pick up pecans, and when I got home Dorcas wanted to eat them, too, and wouldn't crack any for me. Well, one time I was pretty riled up at Dorcas for tattling on me to Daddy about somethin, so I went out and picked up pecans. Then I took some under the house and dropped my bloomers and rubbed them pecans on my privates. Then I put them in a bowl, and when she begged for 'em, I give 'em to her. She went off a crackin 'em with her teeth, like we always did, and I had the last laugh.

I wish you coulda seen Mizmaginn's face a lookin like a marble statue. All's I'm sayin, I told her, is that I ain't mushmouthed and I got my ways of evening things up with folks. Then I went over and picked up the thread and my needle like nothing ain't happened.

Dorcas come back from the outhouse, and she said she'd seen that four layer coconut cake in the pie safe, and wanted to know if she could make coffee and cut that cake.

Mizmaginn looked her square on, and said she'd have to ask Sinai.

Yes, I smiled at my blue striped square, my name is Sinai.



The Musings of a Mother

by Ruth Rhoades

It's 1938 and a beautiful spring day in northern Georgia as I sit on the porch looking across the fields that were once full with cotton. Reveling in thoughts of earlier days, the hardships and sacrifices come to mind first rather than the joys and pleasures through those years. We have endured some tough times on the farm. It was a good life in the 1920's when we first married. Growing cotton was all we knew to make a living until the boll weevil moved across from the West, followed soon with two years of drought. By 1929 when our son, Tommy, was born we were already at a low point. Then the depression hit us and everyone here, and Tommy underwent a heart operation at one month; so rare that there wasn't much hope. However, now he's a normal energetic nine year old and a joy to our family.

I continue to recall the neighbor boy's story about when he was nine and went with his dad on the wagon to sell four bales of cotton. They got paid 42.5 cents a pound and put it in the bank. Sometimes he got his favorite candy, a long stick of striped peppermint with coconut, but he didn't get any that day. He went with his dad the next day with more cotton and vividly remembered the women running around screaming and crying, so he cried too. It was October 29, 1929, the fateful day of the stock market crash. No one would buy their cotton and they had to take it back home. They lost all their money in the bank, so sad. The next week cotton sold for only 3.5 cents a pound.

Pop had to turn to farm animals to stay on the farm, but we never went hungry. There were cows for milk and beef, chickens to provide meat and eggs, and a large garden near the house. However, it has been meager at best. When Ruthie came along in 1931 we were just barely scraping by. Jerry, three years later, has added to the burden, yet also brought pleasure to our family. They now are good helpers on the farm and love to be outside whether working or playing. Tommy and Ruthie even now are stringing feed sacks on a pole down at the creek so the sacks will hang in the water for several days to help get the stamping off the bags. I'll be ready for quilt backing soon, but I sure don't like those letters to show through. Next week we will wash the bags with our homemade lye soap in a tub in the back yard where we will try to rub off what remains of the wording. Then the two older children, plus Jerry likes to try to help, use smoothed rocks to pound on any letters that remain visible. After the bags are washed again, if any writing shows the front of the bag becomes the back and is hidden on the inside. We still grow a small amount of cotton, enough to glean the small field and get enough for carding my own filler for a quilt.



I haven't decided what my next quilt pattern will be, I like most any choice. The scrap bag will need to provide whatever fabrics I have to use. The scraps make into lovely quilts, plus it's fun to look for the prints from my dresses and aprons on the finished quilt, as well as now some from Ruthie's clothes. My Log Cabin quilt is on the frame now, I will lower it from the ceiling this

evening and quilt another block or two by candlelight. I take great pleasure in the pretty colors and in making something attractive from the variety of leftovers. Something from nothing is a popular saying in these parts.



The rolling store is due to come by this afternoon. We watch for Hal to drive up, then look over his stock for that day. I need sugar this week to do my baking for Sunday. My eggs should be enough to trade and get some fruit too. Sugar has started to come packaged in bags with colorful prints, Ruthie and I certainly look forward to that, what a delight. She thinks she is really special when she gets to ride on the wagon with Pop for a trip to the feed store. Not only her time with Pop, but now she can pick from the prints that are recently packaging the feed. Then she is anxious for me to make her a new dress, it only takes one feed sack for a dress for her. She has two dresses, one for church and one for school. Maybe next fall she can have two for school, it would be much easier than washing and ironing a dress every night for the next day. She is growing so fast, she's seven now.

The children look forward to Saturday when we get the yard and house ready for Sunday guests. They sweep the yard to smooth the dirt with the brooms Pop made with the limber dogwood branches. We have new ones ready for the spring, they usually only last one season. We just pluck out the grass; there isn't enough to have a green yard. At least it looks neat after being swept and they make a game out of it. We all look forward to neighbors stopping by after church; we get lonely and work hard here all week. We can see the Maher's on the hill across the valley and the Hughes's down a piece from them. They say the telephone and even electricity will be coming our way soon.

Hal is rounding the bend, the children will come running when they hear the pickup approaching. Visiting with him and looking over his wares is our excitement for the week. I'll reminisce again when I find time to relax on the porch.



The Absolution

by Teddy Pruett

Mariah cut a length of thread from the spool, licked the end, and slid it expertly through the eye of the needle. She took one stitch in the quilt, tugged gently til she heard the quiet thunk indicating the knot was pulled through, and took a needle full of stitches.

“Pooch, I never done no harm nor no disrespect to that man. Me an Hilly been married nearly five year now, and he’s been a good husband. Hard workin, and a clean man, God fearin. But he gits drunk and thinks its fun to tickle me, and him so big. I may be hard as a pine knot, but there ain’t no meat on my bones and it hurts me. Time I git the garden picked and the dinner cooked and cleaned up, then can the day’s pickin, I’ve used up all the good the dinner done me.” Mariah fumed aloud to the cur dog curled up near her foot. He rolled over, edging just a bit under the quilt frame. She moved her elbow up the quilt and turned her hand to quilt toward herself.



“But I got him good last night, I did. Him and Stumpy got tanked up at the Sawdust Trail on the way home from the tabacca auction. He threwed me on the bed, just a ticklin me and me screamin and beggin him to stop. Finally, he passed out, and Pooch, I don’t know what got into me. I straddled him, and grabbed him by that curly head of hair, and scooched him over til I got him to the nightstand, and I just clanged his head up and down til I run outta breath. That old Big Ben fell on the floor and went off, and the alarm didn’t even wake him up! This morning I left his coffee and grits on the stove and come on out here to the pack house, quiltin’ to calm myself down. Seems like when I pick up this needle, troubles just melt right off and I can get me some good, clear thinkin done.” She made a back stitch, ran the needle across to a seam line, pulled it up and cut the thread. “You really ain’t supposed to tie off like that.” she informed the dog. “It’s the lazy way to do it.” She pushed her chair back a bit, admiring the quilt. “This here is called Caesar’s Crown. I do love a yella quilt. I cain’t think of a happier color than yella.”

“Hay! Y’all out here?” Hillsman called, walking toward the pack house. Pooch shot to the door, tail wagging. “Hay Pooch. Your mama out here, boy?” he asked.

“Go away! You know you ain’t sposed to come in here!” Mariah warned. “You promised me you wouldn’t come out here til I told you it was okay! You stay where you are!”

She stepped out on the limestone boulder that substituted for steps, took a look at Hillsman, and burst into laughter. He rubbed the back of his head gently, his hair wild and unruly. His left ear showed signs of blood, his face and neck were bruised, and he moved carefully. She was ashamed of what she’d done, but couldn’t stop laughing.

“Baby, I think I mighta had a little too much to drink last night.” He was sheepish, apologetic. “I

aint never woke up so beat up before. I done looked at the pickup, it ain't wrecked or nothing. What the hell happened?" Mariah attempted to control her laughter, but the more she tried to appear sympathetic, the harder she laughed. She bent over at the waist, hands on her thighs, laughing, laughing. "I'm sorry, Hilly. I'm so sorry to laugh, but you look so funny...." Mariah lifted the bottom of her pink feedsack apron and wiped her eyes. "You was high as a kite when you come home. You parked that truck easy as pie, then come right up the porch just fine, but you passed out in the kitchen. You clunked yer head pretty hard on the fireplace bricks when you went down." She had never lied to her husband before but she continued. "I had a awful hard time getting you to the bed. I knowed how bad hurt you was."

"You took care of me." he said humbly.

"Yes." she fibbed.

"You're a good woman, Mariah." He looked down, pretending to be occupied with the dog. "Now that five years is comin up, I been thinking that I aint never give you nothing special. I'd like to say it's on account of that depression they talk about on the Philco, but that don't really do us no harm nor no good here. I reckon I coulda bought you a purty with the money I spent last night to git drunk, and this morning I am mighty ashamed and I got to ask your forgiveness."

Guilt washed over Mariah. "You give me plenty, Hilly." she said gently. "Here. I got something to show you. I was savin it, but now's a good time. Cover your eyes til I tell you." She took his hand and led him into the pack house. She positioned him to see the quilt in the best light. "Now."

Hillsman didn't say anything for a moment, then caressed the quilt, expelling a long, soft sigh.

"You give me all this, Hilly. You give me the quarter to mail Progressive Farmer for the pattern. All that yella come from feedsacks you brung home. Them round pieces was scraps you brought from your mama's. Them blue pieces is the tails of your old shirts. And you give me time to work on it and don't fuss if I work straight thru dinner, and if I'm a quilting and fergit to put water in the pens you do it for me. There ain't nothin to ask forgiveness for." Mariah said.

But she knew that wasn't true. "Come here. I see some bruises needs kissin'."

The Little Box

by Delaine Gately

Edna was born in 1922 on a remote farm in Michigan. She came from strong Norwegian stock. Growing up in the depression, she learned to make do or do without. Edna never talked about the hardships of farming in rural Michigan. They endured hard times, yet Edna only talked about how wonderful it had been to be a child growing up on the farm.

Edna's daughter Dora held her hand as she took her last breath and whispered "Tom." No one knew who Tom was, so they brushed it off thinking it was just a reaction to the pain medicine.

Edna learned to quilt with her mother and she talked about playing under the quilt frame and listening to the gossip. She had quilted all her life. Dora never understood her passion for quilting. No matter what the weather, every Tuesday morning she would walk to meet her quilting group at the Lutheran Church. She never missed a day. Her quilting circle raised thousands of dollars for charity.

Edna had made many quilts for the family over the years. She would say, "When I die I have set aside a special quilt for each of you; there will be no fighting" They found four quilts wrapped in pillowcases, each tagged with a daughter's name. At her memorial service, they placed them around her casket. The beautiful quilts were like rainbows of love. Edna's life long quilting sisters sat at the back of the Church, dabbing their eyes and sniffing. They silently stood and walked with the casket like honor guards. So many people loved Edna.

After the funeral, there was much to do. The house was a prime piece real estate and it sold in less than a week Dora and her three sisters gathered to clean out the house. They were together for the first time in many years, sharing much laughter and tears as they remembered many stories. It was a good reunion. Then they drew straws dividing the house by rooms giving each their assignments. The laughter stopped and the house fell silent as they went about their duties.

Dora's job was to clean out her Mother's bedroom. She finished the closet and cedar chest. Then sitting on the edge of the bed, she cried a bit and looked at the high-boy. Family pictures stood on top like sentries watching over Edna's bed. There were eight drawers. She started at the bottom and worked her way up.



Drawers are mysterious places; stuffed with many different memories. One drawer had pictures from the farm, great grandmother's lace doilies and some of grandmother's linens. Drawer by drawer, Dora removed the remnants from the past. It must be universal for all women to save pretty lace nightgowns, and silky under things. Did she ever wear any of these? There were boxes of jewelry, fancy handkerchiefs, pretty nightgowns and a tell tail round plastic box that once held a diaphragm, was now full of buttons and pins. Private little secrets neatly folded and tucked away. Dora had a stash just like it at home.

Finally, inside the last drawer was a pillowcase full of baby boy clothes that looked almost new and pushed to the back was a little box. A mysterious box with a small lock like one of those Cracker Jack locks from long ago. Did it hide some mysterious truth about her mother? Could it be jewelry, treasured keepsakes or secret letters? Dora's hands trembled as she put the mysterious box on the bed. Something told her it held a secret.

A wiggle of a bobby pin and the lock opened. Inside she found two locks of hair tied with blue ribbon. A man's high school ring, ticket stubs from the movies, hand written love letters, poems tied neatly with pink ribbon and strips of snap shots from one of those old photo booths. Edna looked so young and in love, sitting happily on a young man's lap. Frozen in time they were being silly, laughing and kissing it was obvious they were in love. Then an obituary dated August 2, 1940 for Tom Anderson, told about a terrible tractor accident, at the Johansson Farm. Johansson was Edna's maiden name. Tom must have been working on grandfather's farm. Underneath that, wrapped in a black silk scarf she found a baby's picture, a birth certificate with tiny footprints and a death certificate all for a baby named Thomas Anderson.

Tears were running down Dora's cheeks. Suddenly she knew her mother's story. Pieces of past conversations came together. Her Mother had loved Tom and she had his love child. How could she keep that secret all those years?

The story told was that Aunty Ester needed Edna's help with her tenth pregnancy. So in the Fall of 1940 Edna packed up and went to California. She never returned to the farm. The baby was a boy named Tom; sadly, he died at six months from meningitis. Edna had always kept a picture of the baby on the high boy. There was always something odd about the stories of baby Tom. Dora put the pieces together as tears of sympathy overwhelmed her.

It was shortly after the baby's death that WWII broke out. Edna joined the *USO*. She met Dora's father John at a *USO* dance. It was a whirlwind courtship. John had served on the *Arizona* and he had survived Pearl Harbor. John adored Edna, but she was always a bit reserved in her affection towards him. Something was missing. Dora often wondered if her mother ever loved him.

When there was a death in the family, Edna never cried, she always seemed so brave, sadly she had met death before and she carried that secret to her grave. The little box held a secret hidden for over sixty years; it held a broken heart and a tragic love story. The little box told the rest of the story.

The House of Nasturtiums

by Joan Kiplinger

She took one last look at the apartment rooms, more of a final inspection but not without nostalgia, and taped a note on the door to the new custodian to replace a broken spring on the Murphy indoor-bed and the bathtub plug. Seven years of hard toil she and George had given as custodians, each holding down two jobs to make ends meet. Children were not an option; sometimes she was thankful to be spared that precious gift of life in these Depression-starved years.

They had left the small Ohio strip-mining town in 1931 to come to Cleveland where George's brother and his wife struggled to keep their small grocery store profitable. There was living space above the store with a spare bedroom to house them until they could afford their own place. George was lucky to find work driving a home-delivery bakery truck and doing odd jobs. She helped out at the store and took in mending and sewing as word of mouth touted her skills; she aspired to turn that talent into a business. Her treasured possessions were an old Singer treadle and her mother's embroidered nasturtium blocks intended for a quilt.



Within the year they were selected from a long list of applicants to be custodians for a small apartment in a commercial section of the city. The bonus was furnished rooms and free rent in return for their services. George was up early to stoke the furnace before going to work, and at night emptied the incinerators and took care of building maintenance and tenants' complaints. She cleaned the hallways and stairs, kept the doors shined and walkways shoveled and took over for George when needed, yet managed time to sew for appreciative customers.

When the bakery went bankrupt, George found temporary jobs ranging from making stove parts to cleaning homes and public outhouses. Despite the free rent, income was barely adequate. Oranges were sky high at 10¢ each, and eaten only once a month during the summer months. Library books were their entertainment. She dutifully sent a few dollars every several weeks to her and George's parents to help with bills as many of the mine operations were at a standstill.



Yet, compared to many who were homeless or jobless she felt that she and George were fortunate, despite their work-weary bodies, sore muscles and scraped hands. Rare was the day when there wasn't a knock at her door from aging maimed ex-WWI servicemen, cripples and dissolute souls who were unable to work, pleading for a quarter to buy food. She wept for those who lost their savings; she and George being so young had none and had lost nothing when the market collapsed. Their youth and optimism were assets; they had not yet experienced that disillusionment which comes from life's hard knocks.

Life took an upbeat turn when two years later they became custodians of a nicer apartment in a better neighborhood. An affluent widow across the hall visited her often. One day she spotted the nasturtium blocks on a table waiting to be boxed. In their many talks, she learned the couple wanted a home but saving money was difficult even though prosperity was becoming a reality by 1937. George was with the WPA now, working on city projects. And she found time to squeeze in a few hours a week to work at a nearby dry cleaner repairing clothes. The owner saw her skills potential, urging her to take free fashion design courses at the local adult education work hall.

In November of 1941, one of her customers who was selling her deceased mother's house offered it to her for \$500. Excitedly she told the widow the good news; she needed only \$50 more to meet that amount. Without hesitation, the widow said she would buy the nasturtium blocks for that price if they were for sale. It would be a present for a friend. Despite protests that the widow was foolishly and extravagantly overpaying, a sale was made.

A home of their own although it would be several months before they could move in due to repairs. On an emotional high, she and George planned their future, endlessly singing Happy Days Are Here Again horribly out of tune but with Caruso fervor.

And now it was time to go. She picked up her tiger-striped cat and walked out the door into the troubled times of that cold March of 1942. On her way to The Home, she reflected the new challenges to be faced. The war had changed everything, bringing turmoil and heartaches. George had been drafted immediately, not having the chance to live in the house he worked so hard to acquire. Which left her she mused still a custodian, this time with a house to manage alone, and she smiled at life's little ironies. With foresight and fortitude she had registered with Civil Defense to be a street warden and with the War Labor Board to take in roomers, persons who swamped industrial cities to work in the war factories. And she herself would begin a job in one next week as a welder trainee. Sewing and fashion, she sighed, would have to be put on hold for the duration.



The widow waved to her as she left. While she was sad to see the couple move, she knew she had done the right thing in helping them out. Oh, God, those ugly nasturtiums; they weren't worth 10¢. But on the other hand they did buy happiness.

Epilogue

One day in 1975, a shopper riffling through a stack of marked-down items at a thrift store found an old battered box held together with a rubber band. Opening it she found 15 large muslin blocks of embroidered nasturtiums in pristine condition. Being a quilter, she knew they would be come in handy someday. Amazing the happiness one could still buy for 25¢.

An Ohio Girl's Life in the 1930s

by Dora Phelps

“Please, do I have to wear these again?” It was 1930 and I was getting dressed for school on a cold, blustery winter morning. Mother insisted I wear long underwear. I asserted that no other girl in the fifth grade had to wear those ugly leggy things under their stockings. They made my legs look fat and wrinkly, but, unfortunately, I had to put them on. That was the last winter, however, that I wore long underwear.

It wasn't always easy being a middle child, and the only girl between two boys. My older brother teased me, and the younger one was a pest that I had to look after.

I grew up in the country in a small house that my father built when I was a toddler. I lived in that same house all my growing-up years, until I was seventeen. We lived on a relatively short country road with homes on just the west side. Farmland was on the east side. These were the Depression years, and my father worked only a few days a month in the steel mill in Youngstown, Ohio. The rest of the time he spent summers either working on our gardens or helping farmers with their planting. Winters, he was able to work in a small local coal mine where he earned the magnificent sum of a dollar per day. Yet I never thought of us as being poor — we just didn't have any money.



Food was never a problem because Mother canned every fruit and vegetable she could get her hands on. We also had chickens for eggs and eating; sometimes we had a few rabbits, usually a pig to be butchered in the winter, one year a cow that we kept for a farmer friend. And, believe it or not, for about three years I had a goat named Moxie. I even milked her in the morning before I went to school and in the evening before dinner. We were never without milk at our house. (I really believe the good bones I have today came from that good creamy milk I consumed so much of when I was young.)

Also, there was really no place to go except to school and church, so a lack of cash really was not a problem. As a teenager I babysat for a neighbor who had two small girls.

Now listen to this: I washed dishes after dinner every weeknight for this family and then put the girls to bed. I also babysat for them on Tuesday and Saturday nights. For this I was paid \$1.25 a week. And, I always had money in my piggy bank.

I enjoyed my high-school years because I had several close friends. One is still my friend today. We are in our eighties, and we've taken trips together and travel to see each other several times a year. There were always games to go to, plus I was on the tumbling team that performed between

halves at the basketball games. There was time for studying and athletics, for earning spending money, and for creativity: I was the “Mystery Woman” in our senior play.



I did all the things that other girls my age did in the 1930s, except (and this is a *big* except), I was not allowed to date while I was in high school. After I became a parent I understood my father's reasoning a little better.

At the end of my junior year our family left the country and moved to a larger home in a residential area. Just two weeks after we moved, my older brother was killed at age twenty-one in an automobile accident. He was not the driver but had gone for a ride in a friend's new car. Because of this, my father became even more protective and would not let me ride in a car with my friends.

Though, in his defense, Dad took me to all the basketball and football games and many times to the roller rink for a school skating party as well.

Fast forward a year and now it is 1938 — I have graduated from high school. Girls did not have the opportunities for scholarships like they have today. Though I was third from top in my class, no one said anything about my going to college. I would have liked to go to a “Beauty Cultural School,” but my father did not approve of that. Since I was only seventeen and still lived in the country, there were not many job opportunities for me. So I finally decided, with financial help from my grandmother, to go to Youngstown College's School of Business. That meant getting a ride with a neighbor into Youngstown and then walking about two miles uphill to the college. I took a Greyhound bus in the afternoon to get back home. I earned what, today, would be considered an associate's degree in business.



Gosh, it is 1940 — my best friend is married with a beautiful baby girl; I have a steady boyfriend and a job. I am making \$45 a month. Without giving it much thought or planning (who does at that age?), my boyfriend and I decided to get married. That happened on June 21, 1941.

My husband was making \$110 per month; naturally, we did not have enough money to buy furniture or rent an apartment. So, it was bunk-in with good, old Mom and Dad.

Then, December 7, 1941 happened. TIME stood still. DREAMS were put on hold.

Momma's Alteration

by Sharon Pinka

May 13, 1935

Dear Aunt Elsie,

Momma said to tell you not to ask about Daddy. He left to go live with that lady in Bexley. Momma says good riddance, but I think she is sad. She doesn't cry but she doesn't say much.

Last night she stayed up late to work on my rainbow quilt. I looked down the stairwell and saw her sitting in the dark by the phone. The only light came from Daddy's green brass reading lamp.. I guess he doesn't need it in his new house. Momma says there's plenty of light for quilting.

Did I tell you about my rainbow quilt? Momma bought the blocks downtown at Woolworth's. She sews the pictures on the blocks in all the colors of the rainbow! I really like the teddy bear and the little bonnet girl. Momma says we can call her Sunbonnet Mary since that's my name. I hope she gets it done for my birthday. I will be 12..

Love, Mary

(P.S. Write back.)

June 27, 1935

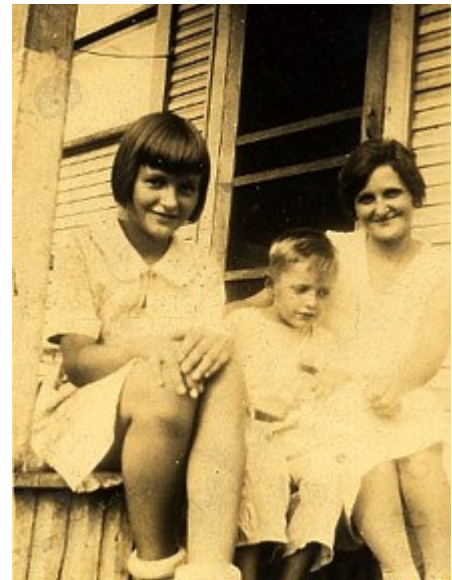
Dear Aunt Elsie,

Thank you for the pretty hair ribbon. Momma said to tell you we have to wait to come visit until she gets money from Daddy. She says that lady in Bexley must have Daddy on a tight leash. I don't understand. Daddy's not a dog.

We got a package from Grandma Fulton in Washington Court House. She sent some big bags – I think momma called them feed sacks. Momma said she can take them apart and sew a dress for me. I like the blue ones best. Momma said she would make an apron from the yellow sack.

Did you hear President Roosevelt on the radio last night? He wants everyone to not be afraid. I'm not afraid when Momma is here. I wish Daddy was here, too.

Love, Mary (P.S. Write back.)



August 14, 1935

Dear Aunt Elsie,

Guess what! Daddy came to visit! He gave me a quarter and a new doll baby. Momma said I can learn to make some doll clothes.. She gave me some scraps from her rag bag and some white buttons. They look like shiny seashells.

Daddy said that lady in Bexley doesn't sew. He asked Momma to sew a button on his shirt. Momma handed him a needle and a spool of thread and went outside to sneak a smoke. I know Momma smokes because she chews Sen-Sens. They taste funny.

Only one more month until my birthday! Will you come to my party?

Love, Mary

(P.S. Write back.)

August 28, 1935

Dear Aunt Elsie,

I'm sorry you can't come to my birthday party. Thanks so much for the pink sweater. Momma said you knit it yourself. I wish I could learn how to knit. The needles look so long and sharp. Momma doesn't knit. She says the only needle she can handle is a sewing needle. She says it's probably a good thing we didn't have knitting needles around when Daddy left.

Momma is sewing my rainbow quilt now. She has it stretched across the frame on the back porch. She says it's too hot to quilt in the house. She finished my blue dress for the first day of school. I will be in sixth grade.

Daddy wrote Momma a letter and sent her some money. She put it with the money she gets from sewing other people's clothes. She cuts off the bottoms of the pants and the skirts and sews them up again. Sometimes the clothes have a label that says Lazarus Department Store, Columbus, Ohio. Momma says we can go shopping at Lazarus when our ship comes in. I don't know how a ship can sail up the Olentangy River, do you?

Love, Mary

(P.S. Write back.)

Sept. 15, 1935

Dear Aunt Elsie,

I want to tell you all about my birthday party! It was lots of fun. All of my friends and cousins were there. Lavina brought me a green pillow with a lady's face embroidered on top. I put it on my bed with my new doll baby. Cousin Billy next door gave me a hanky with my initials on it. Momma said I have to put it in my top drawer and only use it for church.



Momma finished my quilt! She wrote her name on it and my birthday. It says Chloe May Roberts - Sept. 13, 1935. My favorite block is Sunbonnet Mary.

Daddy sent me new shoes to wear with my blue dress. Momma said the money he spent could have bought us groceries for a week.. Sometimes Momma buys us White Castle hamburgers to eat. They cost a nickel each. I like the pickles. I like my new shoes, too.

Momma said we will come to visit you before Christmas. She says times are hard but family is important and we will find the extra money for the street car somewhere. I know she gets tired of sewing for other people but they bring extra clothes and scraps for her rag bag. Momma says we will make do. Do what?

Love, Mary

(P.S. Write back.)

Oct. 6, 1935

Dear Aunt Elsie,

Guess what? Momma got a job! She works at Lazarus doing alterations. (that's my new spelling word!) She got all dressed up in her navy suit and took the street car downtown. She took my blue dress and the rainbow quilt to show what a good sewer she is. Now she goes to work every day. I go to Cousin Billy's next door after school until Momma gets home.

Daddy stopped by to see us. When Momma told him about her new job, he said there have been a lot of changes around here since he left. Momma said the only change she sees is the color of the leaves on the trees. I think Momma's had her own alteration.

Love, Mary

(P.S. Write back.)

Rosie the Riveter

by Barbara J. Woodford



It was a tiny house, with two teeny bedrooms, in which beds barely fit; when you walked in the front door (maybe it was the back, in vacation home territory one never knew what was front or back) you immediately entered the kitchen and squeezed between the sink and the small eating table.

Across the back of the house was a porch where Mr. Gross (appropriately named because of his hobby, but he was a gentle outdoorsman, a game warden in our section of Lake County) where he stuffed his animals. The odors of taxidermy spread throughout the porch and, of course, the walls were hung with every species of animal, no longer animate. I was fascinated by the bowl of glass eyeballs on his counter. He had live raccoons in cages out in the yard.

The Grosses lived across the road from us in a small vacation community with only three permanent residents. Luckily Patty Gross and I were the same age and spent those glorious years of childhood between six and ten playing with each other.

Mrs. Gross seemed young, was very slim and very sinewy. She always wore jeans even though most women in the early forties did not do so. She worked at Orchard Field, now O'Hare Field of Chicago, as a riveter, making planes for the anticipated entry into WWII. Just as in vintage photos of U.S. women who took up men's jobs in those days, she wore a snood and brought home her riveting glasses. She was tough, direct and of Midwestern farm background. She wore lipstick on her upper lip in the shape of a bow. She could chop the head off a chicken in a second.



It seemed that she did not pay much attention to the sprightly two girls out in the yard, but experience showed that she certainly did. She kept her eyes on those two girls who got too close to the fascinating raccoon cages. Mr. Gross was the only one who could let one out and have it sit on his shoulder.

When I indeed sprightly, daringly and stupidly tried to tight-rope walk on the hammock in their yard, I fell down and broke my arm, and she was right there. When my father came home from driving his car into a tree and staggered to our house with his head all wrapped up, I didn't want to go home. Mrs. Gross made me.



Mrs. Gross quilted and smoked, an odd combination. I suppose the two occupations were double attempts at reining in the stress of being poor. Her quilts were simple and made of leftover fabrics. I'd like to say that they copied the animal forms that her husband preserved, but they did not. She made one patches, four patches and maybe the occasional nine patch. I vividly remember her sitting in a rocker and piecing, her cigarette on standby off to the side. Sometimes I would come up to her and watch her deft hands pushing the needle in and out and see the resulting smooth

seam. Then a puff on the cigarette.

In Patty's tiny room was a set of bunk beds and a small dressing table that I coveted. We spent many days trying to make ourselves into Esther Williams or Doris Day, dressing up in both mothers' clothes.

My mother's brother, Billy, lived with us, and he was my friend and playmate, even though I was 7 and he was 13 years old. I looked up to him as an older brother, of which I had none. He and I sailed small boats in the local pond and caught frogs and tadpoles. When my parents were out for the day, we played raucous, housebreaking games. We hung from the upper doorsills and dropped to pillows on the floor. We used hand mirrors to look only at the ceiling as we walked, tripped and tumbled through the house. We moved the furniture around to make forts. Once I had the special honor of being given a ride on his bicycle to school.

Then life was sweet.

When I was seven a terrible thing happened. Billy played the tuba, of all things, in the school band. One night there was a concert and my mother, her mother, Billy and I rode to the occasion in my borrowed aunt's car. When we came home, as my mother waited for Billy to open the manual garage door, my grandmother hopped out of the front seat (for what reason we do not know) and did not close the door tightly. Unaware of this, my mother pulled forward just as Billy stuck his head around the garage doorframe to see if there was going to be enough room. The car door, hinged at the back edge, as 40's cars were then, opened fully and hit Billy on the back and side of his head. He dropped to the pavement.

I can never forget his body on the concrete, the blood coming out of his nose and ears due to the skull fracture and his improbable stillness. He soon died. Everything immediately after that is all confused in my mind.

At some later point I remember ending up in the top bunk of Patty's bedroom with one of Mrs. Gross' multicolored quilts over me. I cried all night. Mrs. Gross came in to comfort me several times. I clutched the quilt and it soon became quite wet. I could not talk about this tragedy for many, many years. I became "the quiet one". But I often remembered Patty's upper bunk, the comforting handmade quilt and the kindness of Rosie the Riveter, the quilter.

Thinking Back...

by Maretta Miller

Ginny had enjoyed a full and satisfying life, surrounded by loved ones and things she loved to do. Now approaching 70, she could count nearly 300 quilts she had crafted for family, friends, and those in need. And to think how that all started!

Watching her three younger brothers was not Ginny's favorite responsibility, but it was important – and time consuming! Mom was now taking classes at The American School of Beauty in Des Moines due to the farming accident in which Dad had been hurt. It had been horrible, the day Dad had lost his arm in the threshing machine, but the whole community had rallied around the family to help out with the farm chores in the aftermath, and she was grateful for that. Now Dad was working the gas station in town, and even managing a little one-handed tinkering under an automobile hood or two – his real passion rather than farming, but it was not adequate to support the family. Mom would soon be able to add to the family income.

Ginny loved her brothers, ages 11, 9, and 4, but they were a handful with all their pranks and mischievous acts which usually ended in gleeful laughing. Fortunately, she had been Mom's sidekick in gardening and cooking and she felt comfortable with those aspects of contribution to the family needs. Sewing, and mending in particular, she did not care to do – she'd leave that to Grandma Fisher, who was handy with the needle as evidenced by scores of quilts and dresses and other clothing made for the families to whom she belonged.

Sometimes she had to referee the squabbles the boys got into, but mainly she either just kept track of them or instigated some activities to keep them busy. There was the stream where they could fish, or swim, or sail boats roughly made from twigs and odd pieces of wood, crowned with small pieces of colorful cloth contributed via Grandma's scrap bag. Getting them to help weed the garden and other chores was another matter.

Then it happened. Absorbed in gathering up canning supplies in the cellar, the panicked words for help from the two older boys broke through her consciousness. Lids tumbling, she bounded up the steps, into the house, past the two wide-eyed brothers, to see smoke coming from her parent's bedroom. "Where's Jimmy?!" she demanded, and they pointed, beginning to cry. Into the room Ginny swept, calling his name. A whimper came from the corner near the closet. Quickly she approached the closet, all the while soothing Jimmy with calming words. Suddenly he was beside her and she maneuvered him to the door, directing all three brothers to go outside.

The curtains were in flames, with the bed at risk of engulfment. Grasping the closest thing at hand, she beat out the fire. When the last cinder had died and she was surveying the damage, she realized what she had used to claim victory. Now it was scorched and burned in places, that lovingly-stitched special quilt Grandma had made for her daughter's wedding. How could she have used that prized possession of Mom's?

That evening there was much talk around the supper table. There were the reprimands for the boys, of course, who had been playing with matches. And there was praise for Ginny's quick thinking and brave work to kill the fire. Although Mom was saddened to see the charred result

of the fire fight, she was happy for the safety of her children. Trying to lift Ginny's spirit she offered the thought that a quilt could be replaced, while her precious babies could not.

The following weekend, when Grandma Fisher came to visit, Ginny engineered a private moment with her to ask if the quilt could be replaced.

"Well, Ginny! Why don't we do that together?" asked Grandma Fisher.

In her eagerness to replace mom's prized possession, Ginny completely dismissed her dislike of needlework. She beamed. She giggled. And she and Grandma Fisher made secret plans.

Throughout the next eight months they collaborated on a quilt – not the same pattern as the fire-singed survivor (for Mom would not give it up), but just as lovingly made. Instead, Ginny chose the periwinkle pattern, a 4-pointed star she planned to fashion from sewing scraps on a white muslin background. Surreptitiously she collected fabrics from family and friends. Grandma Fisher guided her through the mysteries of making templates, marking and cutting fabrics, piecing the top, and finally quilting and finishing the quilt. Ginny was so proud she nearly burst when the last stitch was in place, but she still had two weeks to wait as she and Grandma planned to present it to Mom on her birthday.



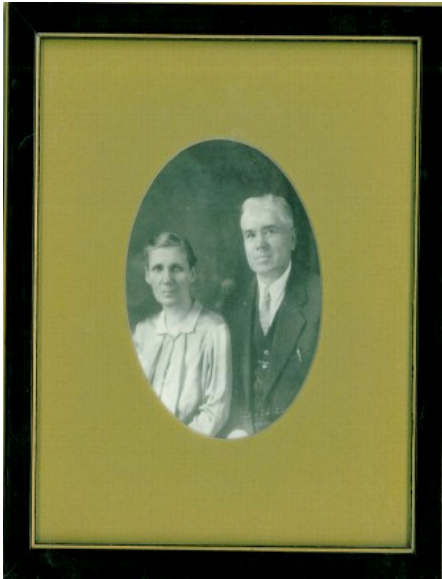
June 22 finally arrived, bright and sunny, and Ginny was busy making the special birthday cake Mom loved – sponge cake with peanut butter frosting. That evening the family gathered to celebrate the event, complete with homemade ice cream and gifts. How Mom delighted in each of the presents, from the colored picture from Jimmy to the delicate china cup and saucer adorned with dogwood from Dad. The final package was wrapped in white tissue paper and blue ribbon, and Ginny gently placed it in Mom's lap. Mom carefully untied the bow, and as the paper fell back, an unbidden "Oh!" erupted as she drew the quilt to her cheek. She looked at Grandma Fisher with grateful eyes and words, but Grandma placed her hands on Ginny's shoulders and announced that Ginny had made the quilt under her tutelage. Ginny could feel her mother crying as they hugged. Her mother kept saying, "I don't believe it!" All around them, family members investigated with awe Ginny's handiwork.

But even greater gifts had been given. To Grandma Fisher, Ginny had bestowed the opportunity to teach her love of quilting to a granddaughter. And to Ginny, Grandma provided the basics of how to quilt, which Ginny learned to love and which became her lifelong passion.

Matte's Quilt of Many Colors

By Delaine Gately

Matte Meyers Gately was born in 1873, she was the second of twins and she was plain in compassion to her sister Mary. She grew up on a prosperous farm in Dakota, Oklahoma. Harvest time brought young men from neighboring communities to help bring in the crops. Her future husband Ernest was one of these men. He first had courted Matte's sister Mary. When she announced her betrothal to another he rebound to Matte and they soon married.



Matte would have a hard life. Ernest turned out to be a stern man. He became a circuit preacher and they were poor. He was not a good farmer and they struggled to keep the farm going to subsidize their income. Matte gave birth to seven children; the first two died shortly after birth. Their names were Alvin, Edith, Edna, Esther and Ernest. The difficult births and hard work weakened her, and she became consumptive. Her daughter Esther was one of the joys of her life. Matte had always quilted, she made many quilts, but the one she made for Esther was her last and very best.

Quilting Bee's were wonderful times of fellowship, but not for Matte. Ernest would not allow it. He felt it was just twiddling and gossiping and she "had work to do." So Matte quilted alone. She bartered and traded to get the fabric she needed and when it was time to put a whole cloth back on her last and finest quilt, she paid dearly for it.

Matte gave Esther the quilt from her deathbed. She had been waiting for Esther's marriage, but knew she would not last another cold winter. Matte died November of 1936.

For Esther, the quilt was her comfort when hard times came; she would wrap in it and do her crying as if in her mother's arms. Sixty years later, a widow with no children, Esther asked me to be her executor and that is when I first saw Matte's quilt. It was magnificent. Esther told me her mother's story and made me promise that Matte's quilt would always remain in the family.

Three years later when friends from her *Daughters of the Nile* group came to visit, they found Esther gravely ill and rushed her to the hospital. She never came home. She went directly to a nursing home and died six months later. As I closed Esther's estate, Matte's special quilt was nowhere and no one knew what happened to it. Matte's quilt had simply disappeared. I could only assume Esther had given it to some one else.

Esther had been Queen of the *Daughters of the Nile*, a Masonic order, when she fell ill. As closed her estate I contacted Betty, one of her Nile sisters, to negotiate the sale of her Queen's ring. She asked how everything was going? I said fine and I off handedly mentioned the missing quilt. Betty bought the ring, but nothing more was said about the quilt.

Weeks later I received a call from that dear woman. She said she had a surprise for me and could I come by? As it turns out Betty was one of the five woman who had taken Esther to the hospital. She remembered Esther would not go without her quilt so they has wrapped her up in it to take her to the hospital. She spent hours in the ER and later was admitted, when she never came home, the quilt was forgotten. Dear Betty, not wanting to get my hopes up, went back to the hospital and searched the lost and found where she found Matte's quilt wadded up and pushed back in a corner. Matte's quilt of many colors returned to her family.



Today I show Matte's quilt as often as I can. Each time I tell her story I unfold the quilt of many colors and there is a gasp in the room. The quilt is bright and beautiful, and I say, "Matte may have had a hard life, but she had pizzazz!" How she was able to collect so many colors, and put them together with such a rainbow effect, is amazing. Matte and Esther loved each other so, and that quilt was their love connection. Whenever Esther needed her mother's love, she would wrap up in the quilt. Everyone who knew Matte told of her good and gentle spirit. Sadly they are both gone and only Matte's quilt is left to tell their story.

Wheel of Fortune

by Suzanne Hardebeck

Background

The story takes place July, 1938 on a farm five miles west of Perry, Oklahoma at the tail-end of the Dust Bowl (1932-1938). Fannie Mae Sanders Barker came to Oklahoma in a covered wagon in 1900 when she was 10 years old, seven years before Oklahoma became a state. She raised seven children in a one-bedroom, three-room frame house that had no insulation, indoor plumbing or electricity.



Fannie's Story

Fannie paused in the kitchen, wiped the sweat from her forehead on her apron and took a long drink from the metal dipper sitting in the water bucket. It was hot and dry outside and like an oven inside. Fannie had finished her morning and lunch chores and had a couple of hours before starting the evening chores.

She hurried into the bedroom and pulled out a box of scraps from under the bed that had been cut into pieces and were ready to sew together. She was making another scrappy double wedding ring quilt. The current quilt had been hung over the window to keep blowing sand out of the house and had nearly been shredded by the sand. The double wedding ring was her favorite scrappy quilt pattern of all time, however, now she was excited over some material she would buy this weekend.

She put a handful of the scrap pieces in her apron pocket along with needle and thread. She thought about looking over the patterns she had cut out of the *Oklahoma Farmer Stockman*, but she had looked at them so many times recently, she could review them by memory while she pieced.

Fannie was 48 and had never had enough material to make a two-color quilt. Of course, she was very fortunate, she reminded herself. Her two daughter-in-laws sewed and gave her their fabric scraps. But this coming weekend when she and her husband took eggs and cream to the Farmer's Exchange and Lindenman's Grocery in Perry, she would have enough to buy the lovely pastel mint green material.

Fannie decided to sew under the pear tree near the kitchen where it would be cooler. As she left the house she passed by the metal wash tub where her two youngest sons' overalls were soaking with lye soap, nearly tripping over the dog and several hens looking for crumbs and scraps. The rest of the items she had washed were already hanging on the clothes line. With the wind and

heat it would not take long for the overalls to dry—she would hang them on the line in a little while.

It was nice to have a little peaceful quiet time. The last time she saw her husband he was heading toward the barn. Her youngest sons were hunting for rabbit or squirrel for supper. She hoped that if they killed a squirrel it would be younger and more tender than the last one. Either way they would not go hungry. They were very fortunate this year. There had been heavy rain in February and some off and on since so that they had not had to carry water to the garden like they had the last five or so years. They had plenty of sweet corn, potatoes, carrots, green beans, onions and tomatoes. No one would go hungry, and before long the pears would be ripe. Fanny licked her lips at the thought of pear pies and preserves.

Actually the garden was doing so well that she would take some corn and tomatoes to a few of her less fortunate town friends when the family went to town this weekend.

Suddenly Fannie was brought out of her meal and quilt planning reverie by smoke and fire in the grass near the barn. If the wind shifted even a little, the barn, hay, and feed inside would be engulfed in seconds. Fannie grabbed the two dripping wet overalls out of the metal tub and headed for the barn at a run calling for her husband as she ran.

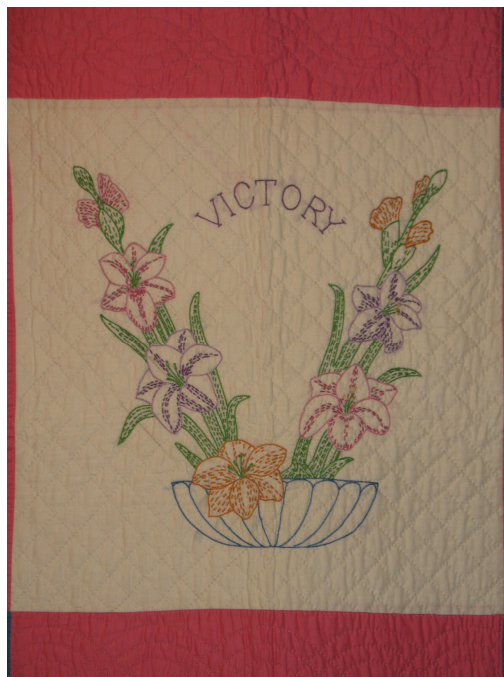
Fannie reached the barn as her husband came around the other side. Together they beat the burning grass and bits of hay with the wet overalls. Evidently her husband had cleaned out his pipe in an area that normally would have been safe. There was very little hay and grass to burn, but with the high winds and dry earth, the embers were able to catch hold this time. They were very fortunate that the fire did not reach the barn. There would have been nothing they could have done but watch it quickly burn to coals.

Fannie walked slowly back toward the house, her adrenalin still pumping, her hair falling out of its usual neat bun, and her clothes and body smelling like smoke. She put the overalls back in the wash tub to soak, and headed back to the pear tree to retrieve her quilt pieces that the wind had scattered about when she had run toward the fire.



The wind had widely scattered her neatly cut and ironed pieces of fabric. The dog was chewing on the largest sewn piece, and one of the hens was pecking and clawing smaller pieces determined to find one that was tasty. Fannie collected the blowing fabric pieces as quickly as she could and shouted at the hen to no avail. The hen continue to peck and claw each piece she could find and most irritating of all, she looked belligerently at Fannie as if daring her to stop her. Fannie seriously considered ringing the hen's neck and having her for supper. However, chicken was reserved for Sunday's and special occasions and thus the hen received a reprieve for a couple of more days.

Heading back to the house, Fannie counted her blessings and made up her mind on the pattern to use with her soon-to- be-purchased light mint green fabric mixed with white fabric. She would use the pattern called "Wheel of Fortune" to celebrate her family's great fortune.



Memories

by Sharon Reeve White

As I look out on the fog filled night, I'm remembering that today would have been Russell's 33rd birthday. I have lived over his short life and tragic death many times in my mind. I'm very sad tonight.

Jonathan Russell, we named him. He came into the world kicking and screaming! He always loved to be outside helping his father on the farm, and he learned so quickly. He was thirteen in 1910, when his father died leaving all of us adrift at first and unsure which way to turn. Russell quickly recovered and encouraged me and his siblings to continue the daily business of living. All I could think about was, what am I going to do with this Indiana farm? How am I going to pay the expenses, and what on earth am I going to do with that section of land his father just had to have hundreds of miles away in the Texas Panhandle? I moved in with friends and gradually learned to live each day. After all, there were still seven children to feed and clothe.



I remember Russell just couldn't wait to join his older brother in Texas. He loved the land from the very first time he laid eyes on it. Getting him to write a letter back home to me in Indiana was like pullin' teeth, but when he did write, his letters were full of enthusiasm for his new way of life. Soon he was encouraging me to bring his other brother, Mark, and three unmarried sisters to live in Texas.

Well, sure enough in about 1918, that's what we did. We found somebody to take up the mortgage on the Indiana farm, and we picked up and moved to what seemed like the middle of nowhere. I will never forget the day we arrived in Texas! The sand was blowing ninety miles an hour, and the first thing we saw when we got off the train was that the men were dipping cattle. Everyone from the whole countryside was helping in the dipping process because they had to kill the ticks and fleas. I can remember the stink of the dip and feel the sand blowing in my eyes as if it happened yesterday. Well, we finally got out to what we called, The Ranch. I don't even remember my first thought when we got there. I think I blocked that scene out completely.

I do remember, though, after getting rested up some, that I looked up, and there was Russell riding his old horse up to the front door with a big grin on his face that said, "Welcome". That made the whole trip worth it, and I had enough pots and pans to cook with and a little furniture. Most importantly I had my sewing and my books, so I knew the kids and I would make it.

We had good neighbors, too, and there was a church in town that welcomed us with open arms. Their first building had burned, so we joined in helping to raise money for another. We ladies made a quilt and had everyone embroidery their names on it so we could sell raffle tickets. The boys even signed their names.

There was a good school, too, and since I used to teach I was very glad that the kids who hadn't graduated would have a place to go. We had lots of good community gatherings there.

We had been in Texas for about five years when one spring it started raining. Rain was always a blessed event, so we were feeling on top of the world. Things were really looking up. The new church building was ready to be dedicated, so all of us except Russell and his younger brother were planning to go into town to attend the dedication. The boys were going out on a small boat in a playa lake to repair a telephone line. Because of the heavy rains, the line wasn't as accessible as it usually was.

Anyway, I knew that Russell was a good swimmer, and the lake couldn't have been that deep, so the girls and I went on to town. Then the bottom dropped out of my world. As we were finishing up a big basket dinner at church, and the speeches had been made, someone came riding up fast saying that my boys had drowned. I couldn't believe my ears! I sat in stunned silence until the girls finally got me on my feet, and we made our way out to the lake. I kept hoping against hope that what they were saying wasn't true. It wasn't long before nearly every man, boy and several of the ladies and girls from town were at the lake.

Finally, though, after the men had spent most of Sunday night and Monday dragging the lake, they found the bodies of Russell and his brother on Tuesday afternoon. I can still feel the shock and sadness. A cousin who witnessed the accident reported that Mark fell in the water and couldn't swim, so Russell tried to save him. Apparently he was trying to encourage Mark to cling to the boat. Anyway, I eventually had to face the reality that both boys were gone.

I picked up the pieces, and with the help of family and friends and faith in God, I not only survived but thrived. I kept every note of sympathy and encouraging word and reread them often. I even became a member of the school board and served as its president.

My next to youngest daughter married and moved to California, so the youngest and I soon joined her. That's how I find myself looking out over a crowded city and foggy night instead of a rain swept plain. In my mind's eye, I can still see Russell as he welcomed us "home to Texas".



Adaline Coppock Reeve

Maggie's Diary

by Judy Breneman

October 27, 1941

Jim got a raise today! What a blessing, now he earns enough to support our little family, our baby will be born late in July. We have a lovely little home here on the desert. It's made of adobe in a box shape. Perfect for hot Arizona summers.

Yesterday we drove among the Organ Pipe Cactus with Alice and Charley Grant. What a grand time we had driving about the desert and stopping for a picnic in a shady wash. We are so lucky to have a car. Charlie drove Jim to California to pick it up. A cute well used Model T.

My dear Jim built an ocotillo fence around our tiny yard. It will keep the coyotes out when we sit outside on warm summer nights. A cozy safe place for the three of us. I do worry about scorpions and spiders though. No fence will keep them away. But Jim says we can keep a net over the crib so our baby will be safe.



December 7, 1941

We were driving back from an excursion to Mexico with the Grants yesterday when a patrol car waved us down. We couldn't imagine what he wanted out there on that lonely road. He didn't act as if he was going to give us a ticket. It turned out he had alarming news. America has been attacked by Japan. How could that be? At first we thought he must be joking but he continued on dead serious.

We hurried home where we could turn on the radio for more news. It happened in Hawaii, so far away but still American. We have no idea how this will change our lives.

Tomorrow I will sew. I'll soon need maternity clothes and I want to make some little gowns for the baby. Something to keep my mind off my fears. I must not think about what might happen ... that Jim may have to go to war. Too frightening to consider.

February, 20, 1942

I'm now wearing the maternity tops and skirts I made. They make me feel so special. Jim and I so wanted a baby. I made two skirts, one for everyday and one for good. I ordered some cheerful prints from Sears for the tops. It was so much fun picking out which fabric to order.

The really great news is that Jim won't have to go to war. It turns out that copper is needed for the war effort. Since Jim works in a copper mine he will be exempt from the draft. I'm so relieved. I've been worried for so long.



April 15, 1942

I went to my doctor appointment today. The doctor seems to be concerned about my blood pressure. I need to eat carefully and stay away from salt. I'm sure if I follow his instructions I'll be fine. I won't let myself fret about it. I'm glad the company has a hospital here in town, so assuring that care will be close by.

Alice came with me and afterwards we sat out on the lawn in the commons. People like to picnic there as it is the only grass for miles around. The company store sits at the end of the square so after relaxing we went by the store and bought a few groceries.

If it weren't for the company there would be no place to buy things we need but I suspect they charge more than is right. Fortunately I'm good at putting a meal together at little cost. Since I love to sew we don't have to spend much on clothing either.

June 25, 1942

We had quite a fright last week but it ended well. Last Tuesday my left cheek went numb. I still have a little trouble speaking. The doctor said it was toxemia. They rushed me to the hospital and gave me something to make the baby come early.

Jim and I were so anxious but a baby girl arrived safely. She was over a month early and just over 4 pounds but she seems to be well enough. The temperature inside the hospital is over 100 degrees which is lucky as our little Sally needs to be kept warm. She and I will be here in the hospital for another week where we will have good care from the nurses.

Sally is so small that she swims in the little nighties I made for her. We had ordered diapers from Sears but they haven't come yet. Jim is trying to find someone who has diapers they can loan us. What a mess! I tried so hard to take good care of myself but I should have done better.

July 3, 1932

Mother isn't here yet as we never dreamed our baby would be born so early. But we are home and looking forward to her coming. We are so lucky to have two bedrooms, room for mother to stay for a while.

Jim took a photo of her on the quilt my grandmother made for our wedding. She looks so sweet but seems so thin in that big diaper. I need to keep in mind that the doctor says she is doing fine. What a miracle to have her safely here with us. When mother arrives I'm sure all will be well.



The Writers' Statements

I asked each writer for a brief statement describing what inspired her story or her desire to enter this challenge. I encourage the reader to wait until *after* they have read the stories to read their statements. This is why I placed them alphabetically at the end, with their city and state, so as not to let what influenced each writer effect your experience of the journey they created and mapped out with their words. Let their words influence you to awake to the dawn of a new day, a road not taken, a stranger becoming known.

Miss Jordan Anderson- The Art of Apple Pie

Westminster, CO

The inspiration for this story came from a memory I have of my grandmother. She had two biscuit recipes, "the easy way," and "the hard way." She wouldn't give me the "hard way" recipe until I was older because she had a few secrets buried in that recipe that she didn't want to get out. But as she taught me to roll out the dough, and insisted at least 10 times that I only use a certain size and shaped biscuit cutter, she also told me stories of when her mom taught her the recipe, and how careful she had been all these years to protect it.

As I wrote this story, I realized how unique, yet universal, the language of cooking is as part of a family history. Even the most humble and simple of ingredients, such as those in an apple pie, can carry with them the stories that are passed down from generation to generation.

Judy Breneman- Maggie's Diary

Green Valley, Arizona

I joined this challenge as I had never written fiction and wanted to stretch my possibilities. The story was based on stories my mother told me about before and when I was born. It is mostly fictional beyond that.

Delaine Gately- The Little Box -

Gig Harbor, Washington

First and foremost I love a challenge, Six years ago our family went thru the process of cleaning out my mother-in-laws house after a flood, I had her bedroom I didn't find a box and there was no deep dark secret found, but the experience was very moving and it inspired the story.

And

Matte's Story is based on fact with a little stretch here and there. I love a challenge; it inspires fresh ideas and my creative spirit gets fired up. I think up and create outside my box, I am past worrying about the critics in this world; they did not hold me down. It was my own fear of failure, but no more. Win or lose I am going to jump and let my creative juices flow. Besides it is fun.

Suzanne Hardebeck- Wheel of Fortune

Austin, Texas

The story was inspired by my Grandmother, Fannie Sanders Barker who quilted mainly scappy quilts. She lived on a farm and raised seven children in a one-bedroom house. The basic facts are true--putting out the fire with wet clothes but I am unsure of the exact dates. All her children felt their home was the center of the universe.

She is a great inspiration to me but this is the first story I have written and several times decided not to send it in. My sister and aunt enjoyed the story, however, so one evening I pushed the send button figuring no one would know--not even my husband.

Joan Kiplinger- The House of Nasturtiums

Mentor, Ohio

This is a tribute to my parents and their generation who endured the Depression, asked not for charity nor handouts and sacrificed to make a better life for themselves and their children. Most of the incidents in the story are based on their experiences and some of my recollections as child. Ironically, it took another human tragedy, WWII, to bring prosperity and end the Depression years.

Rita Larom- Maizie's Hope

Lopez island, Washington

When I heard about the story challenge with historical focus, I immediately felt myself as a child back in my grandmother's house, tracing pieces on her quilts and remembering where they were from. Her aprons, my dresses, my brother's shirts all reappeared in the quilts from scraps she had saved. And I heard her tell about a quilt her grandmother made by intertwining her son's Civil War Union blue uniform with Confederate gray. I knew he died but it was years later when I learned he was a twelve-year-old drummer boy who succumbed to pneumonia at Shiloh. When I lost my own daughter, I gained so much more appreciation for the pain and resolve that Civil War mother went through as she pieced the quilt. Another of my grandmothers lost six children to diphtheria. Not an unusual happening at the turn of the century. I accepted the challenge to commemorate all those sturdy women who went before us.

Maretta Miller- Thinking Back....

Janesville, Wisconsin

The moment I read the challenge something inside me stirred, and I knew I would write a story to submit. For me, genealogy, quilting, and stories are intermingled through a strong inspiration from my great-grandmother Opha Nevada Reeves Fisher. At first glance this may seem strange, since she died when I was but four years old. But she left evidence of her passions – genealogy notes, hand written stories, many quilts, and most importantly, the love of family – and I found them!

Though based loosely on a variety of family members, the characters in my story are fictitious, with most of the incidents based on real events from my family history.

Patricia J. Perry- Elizabeth's Quilt Challenge

Waterford, Maine

Although this story is about a woman living in the U.S., I actually learned about this writing contest from Susan-Claire Mayfield, Gourmet Quilter, who lives New Zealand. After reading the criteria for the story, I was interested because I had just recently read about the Sears Quilt Contest at the Chicago World's Fair and the story behind the winning quilt.

I wrote this story using memories of my grandparents' frugal ways, and also my mother's Aunt Mary who lived very much like "Elizabeth" on an old farm in rural Maine. I have wonderful memories of trips there, and her home was the focus of my story. I enjoyed writing this story and it was sort of a "trip down memory lane" as I recalled many memorable happy times.

I am a quilter, and I also used to sew my own clothes, and those of my daughter using parts and pieces from several different patterns to create my own designs.

Dora M. Phelps- An Ohio Girl's Life in the 1930s

Bradenton, Florida

Why did I decide to write this story? My daughter, Janice, brought this contest to my attention and reminded me that I had entered a short fiction article in a contest some years ago. After a little thought (two minutes), I decided to let the young people of today know what life was like for their grandparents and great-grandparents in the early 1900s. We did not have all the electronic equipment, designer clothing, etc. that children and teens have today. And our parents, while not having money, also did not have debts. I would not like to go back to those times, but I also don't like what is happening to our country today.

Sharon Fulton Pinka- Mamma's Alteration

Bellville, Ohio

I chose to enter this challenge as a way to explore my fictional writing. I am always doing research and writing non-fiction and this was a fun way to be creative!

I also saw it as a unique way of writing about my mother and grandmother's situation during the 1930s depression. Much of my story was based on fact. My grandfather left my grandmother for another woman (he came crawling back in the 1940s!) leaving my grandmother to support two children on a very limited income. Although not a strong seamstress, she did piece work and took in laundry to make ends meet. I saw evidence of this strength years later in the ways my grandmother and mother tackled life and further hardships. My grandmother took my grandfather back into her life, but on her terms, and I admire her character and perseverance.

The lesson I wished to impart was to make the best of a bad situation and find your good moments in the things and the people you love.

Teddy Pruett-

Lake City, Florida

The inspiration for "The Absolution" was a bit of gossip I overheard as a child. One of my mother's friends, a tiny woman who reminded me of Olive Oyl, actually attacked her big bear of a husband in exactly this way, for exactly this reason. There's nothing like the truth for inspiration! She is still alive - I wonder if I should show her the story.

And

"My Name is Sinai" is a story that had been rumbling in my head for a while, but the name was different, and I was displeased with it. Fortuitously, just the week before the call for stories came out, I appraised a quilt from 1853. The maker's name was Sinai - I loved it immediately. The other name, Siney, was that of an elderly farm woman who lived near my aunt. We worked tobacco with her when I was a child, and I always wondered what Siney's real name was. So I paired the two and the name was perfect to illustrate the universal struggle for power between daughters in law and the husband's mother.

Ruth Rhoades- The Musings of a Mother

Eastanollee, Georgia

Merikay Waldvogel is the first reason for my story. She was a member and attending the 1997 meeting of the American Quilt Study Group when I presented my paper on Feed Sacks in Georgia. Therefore I feel a connection specifically with her. During my presentation I referred to an ugly green that appeared on the feed sack prints for several years and showed a sample. I was embarrassed that afternoon to see Merikay wearing a blouse of nearly the same green. Also, because of my research on feed sacks, I have information from a variety of people about life during the years 1902 – 1942 that I like to share. My story includes only true statements which came from many sources.

Sharon Reeve White – Memories

Friona, Texas

When I read about the Women on Quilts' Creative Story Challenge, I immediately thought of Great Grandmother, Adaline Reeve. There are many stories waiting to be written about her life, but I focused on this particular one because of an entry in one of her numerous diaries. In this entry, she mentioned the death of her son. Also, I have wanted to find a way to share her life with our granddaughter who is named -- Adaline.

Barbara Woodford- Rosie the Riveter

Hanover, Illinois

I did not need to be inspired to write this story. I live with it and have lived with it every day for 65 years. The only incitement to write it was that a call for a story coincided with my sudden willingness to speak publicly of the tragedy, and I wrote it in one evening.

The Tasters and Their Choices

We'll begin this section with Tracy Jamar's words from NYC. She sets the stage as she begins her thoughts with an overview of the content of the stories submitted:

It was a pleasure to be part of this inaugural creative writing event. Each story gave form to the various ways women cope and pull themselves and their families together in difficult times; they were about the strength of everyday women doing everyday things. These stories contributed collectively in acknowledging women's resiliency and fortitude.

Most of the stories took place in farming communities or small towns, settings long associated with extended families, communal awareness and hard work. Many of the entries had tragedies or injuries and explored how families and individuals dealt with the consequences; several stories turned a difficult situation into a life affirming one.

The activities mentioned, whether sewing, gardening or cooking, were used not only as daily needs required but also as means to find solace and comfort and as a connection to the past. When sewing and quilts were referenced they were used as memory markers, reminders of the past brought to the present and passed on to the future. Even if used in a commercial sense they held much more than fabric and stitches.

Women were seen in all aspects of life from home based to working in factories and going to school. They were the ones to step in and pick up in whatever form the family or community needed. Some stories had moral attachments, others were slice of life vignettes and others expressed how traditions are transferred to the next generation. I did find it interesting that men and boys were not usually shown in the most complimentary light.

It was a pleasure and an honor to be asked to participate in the "Call for Fictional Stories". I hope this is the first of many "calls" to come.

First Place: "Maizie's Hope"

This story defines an ineffable life spirit. How a family's children, tragically lost, are remembered in a creative and life affirming way in the form of a quilt. Hand sewing this quilt helped the mother refocus her life and alter the sad past into a loving memory for the present. The result is a mnemonic gift made to honor the children and as a family signifier for a child born after the loss. It becomes as much a connector to the past as a comforting support in to the future.

This writer captured the essence and emotional power inherent in our everyday belongings. By using the clothing in a quilt she makes apparent the intimate immediacy that is more powerful and near than might be found in a photo book or verbal description.

Women's legacy is often passed on in the form of needlework, handed down within families and speaks of much more than can be seen in the bright prints and pretty designs.

My choice: "Thinking Back..."

The author sets the story up well and lays out traditional responsibilities of the female characters and the relationships within the family. A nearly tragic event provides the opportunity for a young girl, Ginny, to learn how to make a quilt. Guided by her grandmother, this quilt making experience endows Ginny with skills that bring her pleasure throughout her life.

Though the mother acknowledges that the loss of the quilt is far better than the loss of her children she also recognizes that the damaged quilt now has a documental value of its own, for she does not want it "fixed".

Here an unfortunate situation is turned into a positive life affirming learning experience, which bonds the generations more closely by passing along a tradition and heritage in both emotional and physical form. The author beautifully substantiates the essential, personal and intimate meaning inherent in a family's handmade quilts. A form of historical documentation not often recognized, as it is not in the form of mortar and brick but in an oral and handcrafted tradition that is understood on a visceral and intimate level.

Writing

Writing is very much like making a quilt, knitting a sweater or hooking a rug. You have all the components and designs but it doesn't really mean much until you put it all together. With each writing exercise skills are improved and ideas are honed and brought in to greater focus.

I remember someone commenting on another person's statement that they knew what they meant they just didn't know how to say it. It was pointed out that they really didn't know what they meant until they could express it. A good way to organize and formalize one's thoughts and ideas is to write them down.

Writing creatively is a wonderful way to sort out thoughts and opinions through examples rather than by directives. It expands a writer's perspective and helps relay the idea that nothing is ever really simple and yet it is all basic. Many needs and desires are universally shared even if the modes [of expression] are different.

My childhood was spent primarily in Minnesota, Duluth and Minneapolis, with summers at a 19th century log cabin built by my maternal grandfather, Frank Lynam, in northwestern Wisconsin. An interest in crafts and antiques led me to sell my handmade items at craft shows and become an antiques dealer in Minneapolis during the 70s.

My horse, Arrow, and I moved to NYC in 1979. As head of restoration and conservation services for the well-respected gallery, America Hurrah Antiques, I had the opportunity to handle and work on a wide variety of the finest American textiles. I opened my own restoration business in 1985.

In the fall of 2006 I decided to finish a college degree I had left hanging and found that making my own creations with fiber is a path I need to follow more fully. Having cared for countless

antique handmade textiles I now want to be part of the continuum of women who leave their mark with a needle and thread.

Some of my works can be seen at <http://www.tracyjamar.com>

Next are the comments from taster Karen Porter, living near Baltimore, Maryland:

Reading the stories was a joy. I come from a long line of handworkers, and was lucky to have learned how to sew and crochet from my grandmother and aunt. I taught myself to knit. When my grandmother passed, she left me her mother's sewing box and which held several small knitted items, so I suppose the predisposition was genetic.

I saw the joy that handwork produces, the pride in accomplishment and the meaning it adds to an item. We will never know each woman's story but holding an item a woman made tells us something about her. In times when a woman's worth was measured by societal standards, many women found they could shine by creating something special to eat, wear, decorate their home, or keep a family member warm.

In telling the stories of women, the writers share their gift for storytelling. Through joy and laughter, tragedy and tears, women have done the best they could for themselves and their families, whether it was during the depression of the 30's, the Great War, or World War II. We can learn from our grandmothers and mothers, keep our priorities straight and see our families through the current trying times.

I loved the story "Thinking Back..." Ginny used her mother's quilt to put out the fire and was able to sew a replacement with her grandmother's help. The connection of the generations through quilting rang true and made the story real. "The Little Box" touched my heart because it was my task to go through my mother's possessions and distribute them along with some of my grandmother's possessions. I did learn things and understood some things better as a result. "Maizie's Hope" was a delight. The story of a family was captured in a quilt. Maizie designed and made the quilt and when she told her daughter the story of each section, she passed down the family history along with the physical quilt. The gifts of women, the quilts, pies, sweaters and the stories about them; we are richer for them.

Karen Porter authored *Conscious Choices, An Evolutionary Women's Guide to Life*.

A fiber artist, she used to quilt and giving many vintage pieces a second life. Karen co-founded *Children in Common* in 1992 and was *Knitter's Magazine* "Knitter of the Year" for 2007-08 for using knitting to help children remaining in institutional care in the former Soviet countries.

Today she writes and knits and continues to coordinate orphanage relief efforts. You can read about *Children in Common* at <http://www.childrenincommon.org> She shares her thoughts and writing at <http://www.thepeacesisters.org/karenporter/blog/>

Last but not least, is Susan Wildemuth, (those "W" surnames often place you last, I know) living in southern Illinois:

First Choice- Maizie's Hope

Ask any mother what the worst pain on the face of the earth is and she will tell you -outliving your children, it simply is not suppose to happen. Maizie's Hope is a tale about a woman who suffers that heart-wrenching loss and details her journey back from the pain.

It is the richness of the characters that make this story so appealing. Maizie could have laid down and no one would have blamed her, but instead the author showed us how she slowly made her way back to herself by doing for others and keeping her hands and mind busy creating a memorial quilt to honor her children. I also like the author's use of Mrs. Wright in this piece. Wouldn't it be nice if each grieving soul had a friend like that in their life, someone who lets you be what you need to be for a spell, but then quietly encourages you to "move past it?"

This story was well thought out and written. I'm glad to see that the author of this piece only used a "dash" of regional language ('cause and chasin') understanding that the overuse of regional language could have bogged down her wonderful writing. Bravo for making that decision!

This story is true to the idea that when one door closes to us, another is opened. Maize was blessed with the gift of another child at the age of forty. We, the readers, were blessed with a good story and can find comfort in the theme – there is always hope.

Taster's Favorite -Elizabeth's Quilt Challenge

This judge's favorite was Elizabeth's Quilt Challenge. I like the story on many levels. It was a well thought out solid piece of writing which kept my interest from the opening paragraph to the end. This author painted a picture with her pen of a real 1930s Midwestern farm wife of modest fortune who worked hard and loved her family. Utilizing ingenuity, a "can-do" attitude, and creativity, she found a way to bring beauty into her life and coin into the family coffers through her love of quilt making.

I think the thing I like the most about this piece was Elizabeth herself. This woman knew she was poor, but she did not dwell on it or become defined by it. I like this passage, "There would be roses from pink fabric left over from the dress she made for her daughter's first day of school, bluebells from her son's romper, and buttercups from yellow fabric for which he bartered a couple dozen eggs. The pure white background fabric was purchased with money earned by sewing a dress for her daughter's teacher." Elizabeth used what she had, but when she needed fabric, she created a plan and figured out how to go about getting it done. There was no "woe is me" or "victim" in Elizabeth's personality, she put one foot in front of the other, constantly moving towards a goal until she accomplished what she set out to do – create a quilt. That is what women who live "in spirit" do – they take action.

The ending paragraph ties the whole piece up into a well crafted package. "Elizabeth stood proudly by her prize winning quilt as the others gathered around to congratulate her. The

countless hours she has spent painstakingly stitching each piece of the quilt had been rewarded ten fold. The prize money was a bonus – the real reward was the heirloom quilt she would pass on to her daughter.” Well done – very well done!

If I were able I would award a Second Place Honorable Mention to Thinking Back... by Maretta Miller.



Why do I write?

I write fiction and non-fiction and I do it for very different reasons. I write non-fiction to educate and to give a “voice” to those, who might not otherwise be heard. My specialty in non-fiction is quilt and needle art history and I am all about “telling the story” of the “quiet ones” the men and women who created these works of art, who were not necessarily in the limelight. I write fiction because I simply must, it is something that pours out of me.

I have known, since the moment I picked up a #2 pencil in fourth grade and wrote the short story called “Why Peter Got His Cotton-Tail?,” that “taking quill in hand” is what I was meant to do. Writing both fiction and non-fiction also gives me a voice and a forum to be heard.

I come from a family of wonderful left brain – analytical thinkers who make their living in the military or as police officers, mailmen, lawyers, and EMTS. I suppose someone thought it would be funny to slip a creative right brain thinker into the mix and so here I am. I love to create – therefore I quilt and write.

Sue Wildemuth is a writer and quilt maker who lives on an Illinois grain farm with her husband, son, and Nicky the dog. Her writing and photographs have been featured in numerous national quilt and non-quilting publications. Her website, Illinois Quilt History: Quilt History from the Midwest, was established in 2008 and can be found at <http://www.illinoisquilthistory.com>. She is active in the Humane Society, several quilt organizations, and has a deep love of libraries.

My personal last words....

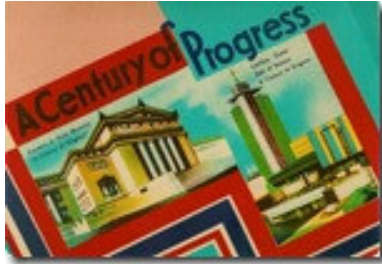
Although I was not involved in the judging, I found the story *Mama's Alteration* by Sharon Pinka, brought joy to my heart and made me laugh out loud. It is written in a rarely seen style, a series of letters which authentically portray the confusion a pre-teen girl of divorced parents in the 1930s might experience, and leading her to relate with another close adult figure, her Aunt. The story told through the little girls letters is bittersweet and darn right funny.

Which story spoke to you?

The Original Call for Stories Posted on my WOQ Blog

Call for Fictional Stories as Fundraiser for The Quilter's Hall of Fame & a Salute to Women's History Month

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."
Albert Einstein



As a fundraiser for The Quilters Hall of Fame July 2009 induction ceremonies of *Merikay Waldvogel*, Women On Quilts is sponsoring an invitation to women to write a creative story about growing up as a female, between 1902 and 1942* in the US.

In 750-1000 words, your story will have as the central theme a female, any age or ethnicity, living alone or in a family that is just making enough money to just get by each month, or less, BUT she doesn't see it this way. She is surrounded by neighbors and a circle of friends who are also living the same way, poor. This is pre-television time and radios and electricity were not available everywhere. Word of mouth was the news in neighborhoods over much of our country then. As reporter G. Brown said "I don't need to write the news, I see it on the face of everyone I meet."

The main female also has a creative passion - cooking, gardening, sewing, knitting, quilting, embroidery, rug hooking, photography, writing, or art which must be at least acknowledged in the story. It does not have to be central to the story, although it can be. Your female character can be someone that existed in your family, but your story is written as fiction. You can choose to write in first or third person. Your story can be written as a narrative, diary entry, dialogue piece, what ever format you want.



Photographs or illustrations can accompany your story, but they must directly relate to the characters and story and they will be embedded in the text where they fit the text.

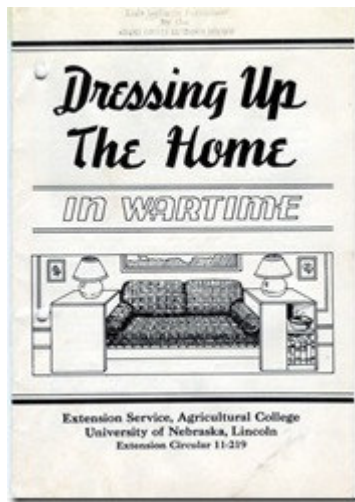


The women who came before us; mothers, workers, doctors, teachers, nurses, writers, artists, inventors, activists, gardeners, biologists, public servants and many other contributions made by women are celebrated in March. It is *Women's History Month*, *National Craft Month*, and *March 20 is National Quilting Day*. American Literature, biographies and published diaries tell of the pleasure and

insight women acquired writing stories or accounts of their daily life in personal journals. Writers, artists, poets, inventors, quilters and designers were especially drawn to putting their thoughts and observations on paper.



Einstein stated that our "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Why would this brilliant man come to that conclusion? Perhaps it is because without imagination, dreams and creative thought, there would be no knowledge beyond instinctual and biological responses. Even language began in the imagination of someone!



Many would argue that imagination is at the foundation of all accomplishments big and small. Seeing with our mind's imagination precedes the actions we take that lead to the experiences in our life. Ask *Helen Keller*, *Anne Frank*, *Amelia Earhart*, *Oprah Winfrey* and *Susan B. Anthony*. Their imagination took them beyond what was possible in their day and it led them to make their dream a reality.

A road beautifully filled with your expectations is a dull experience when compared to a road built with experiences using your imagination as your guide. *Helen Keller*, both blind and deaf, said "It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision."

Let your imagination fly as you write your story about a woman who came before us and your entry donation will help the

women who follow us.

"Writing in a diary is a really strange experience for someone like me. Not only because I've never written anything before, but also because it seems to me that later on neither I nor anyone else will be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl." *Anne Frank* (June 20, 1942)



A panel of three independent jurors, all published writers and needle workers in quilting and other creative arts, will select all the final stories

For information about entering the invitational, the jury process, the fund raising effort and to find out why we chose the dates 1902-1942 go to this page and you can print it out for easy reference. http://www.antiquequilt dating.com/WOQ_Story_Fundraiser.html

The deadline for submitting your story is April 20, 2009.

We look forward to reading your story! The eBook of finalists will be copyrighted, but you will hold the copyright on your story and the photos. It will never be sold or profited from monetarily, but it will be shared and enjoyed by women all over the world.

Thank you for your participation and for your donation for underwriting the Merikay Waldvogel Honoree Exhibit this July at The Quilters Hall of Fame. Your donation will also benefit [Quilters' S.O.S. - Save Our Stories](http://www.allianceforamericanquilts.org/qsos/), (<http://www.allianceforamericanquilts.org/qsos/>) the oral history project of The Alliance for American Quilts. The funds we raise will also be used by TQHF for transcription of oral histories from some of the founding members of the Marie Webster Guild, formerly The Friends of the Quilters Hall of Fame. Their stories will become historical records. They'll be online for the public through Q.S.O.S. at The Alliance and in the project's archives in the Library of Congress.

Contact: Kimberly Wulfert by email: interviewsbykim@gmail.com or snail mail to me at 226 West Ojai Ave., Suite 101 #107, Ojai CA, 93023