



Summer is coming to Whidbey—which means greenery and blossoms, and maritime temperatures in the 70's, latté and laptops as we invite you to read of Janet McCallen's experiences at the previous session of Christina's writing class, *The Self as the Source of the Story*. Thank you Janet for communicating so clearly what happens in this focused circle.

Circle Tale #59: June 2005

The Self as the Source

I spent a wonderful week on Whidbey Island, off the coast of Seattle, at a retreat workshop called "The Self as the Source of the Story." Seventeen writers came to engage in a process Christina Baldwin has been facilitating for several decades.

We gathered at Aldermarsh, a delightfully quirky retreat center nestled in a grove of alder trees on South Whidbey Island. Cell phones don't work (unless you stand facing east in one corner of the meadow), and there is no television or radio, either. Most of us shared bathrooms, though we had our own bedrooms. Mine was at the top of the main house, and I loved its eccentricities and being in the middle of things. If I come again to Marsh House, I think I'll choose Spirit House, one of the little cabins in the woods, and experience its splendid isolation.

But the week wasn't about the setting, beautifully restful and restorative though it is. It was about our stories, about finding the courage and craft to write them. Christina shared her wisdom about writing at morning sessions and then we took afternoon breaks for writing. Some of us wrote. Some of us came up with new and innovative ways not to write – a long walk, a nap, a chat, or just staring into space. I came away with a renewed commitment to writing, and to the importance of stick-to-itiveness – or "bum glue" as Elizabeth George calls it (to glue your bum in the seat so that you can write).

On Saturday, we each had half an hour to read something we'd written and get feedback from the circle. I can't imagine more supportive feedback than the group gave; I cherish it. The best part of the week, though, was hearing the stories from my fellow writers. And what stories they were! I laughed and I cried. I held my breath; my heart ached. I was in awe of the courage and vulnerability, the wisdom and the generosity spoken into that room.

When (not if!) those stories become books and are published, I will buy every one. And I will review them for you and recommend them to you; you will be richer for reading these stories, as I am for hearing them.

Wishing you the courage to tell your stories,

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