

The Flight of the Mind

Summer Writing Workshops for Women



A Short History

1984 to 2000



This is a project of Soapstone, which generously covered the expenses and gently prodded us over many years to complete it.

© 2022 by Ruth Gundle and Judith Barrington

JUDITH

We started working on this history two decades after the last summer of Flight. Ruth went through boxes of photos, audio tapes, and documents that had been stored in our attic. Among the photos— some of which are used here—are many that were sent to us

with permission to use them as needed; our apologies for not keeping track of who took which ones. Ruth’s sister Barbara Gundle, a professional photographer, came twice to take photos; the professional-looking black and white photos were taken by her. Some were taken by Tee Corinne,

also a professional photographer (1943–2006), while a participant at the workshop. Photos are identified and credited where possible, in a section at the end.

The text was conceived of and written by Ruth and me with contributions from **Anndee Hochman**. We originally thought this history would be an iMovie, using stills, in the “Ken Burns style,” working with **Char Breshgold**. When circumstances in our lives delayed it, and Char needed to move on to other projects, we all agreed that a PDF was more suitable for our purposes and Ruth was able to take on the production.

We expanded the narration we had written for the iMovie but kept the three speakers—Ruth, Anndee and me—rather than making it a less personal third person account. The speaking parts were assigned, in some cases randomly, to give a variety of voices, but we all edited and/or approved what follows our names. Ruth and I thank Anndee and Char for their





key contributions and for adding their memories and enthusiasm for this project—as well as their photos.

RUTH

We also thank the many Flight participants and staff who responded to our call to share their recollections. Excerpts from what they sent us are incorporated into the text or appear as sidebars.

Flight of the Mind was unique, nothing like it had existed before (and nothing like it has existed since, so far). Our aim was to tell the story of Flight for everyone who was there—the writers, teachers, and staff, including ourselves; for the various state and national archives which collect feminist and literary history; and for readers in the future who are curious about what feminists did at the end of the 20th century (and how they did it) or who might be inspired to create something similar of their own. We are not dispassionate observers; we created and sustained Flight and when we could no longer, it ended; no one came forward to carry it on. We poured some of our best energy of those years into it and we unabashedly loved it.

This history reflects that love. It is told from the inside, from our own lived experience and memories. There could very well have been women who came and left unmoved and untouched by their time there. There were probably not many, as we read every evaluation and had personal contact with most of the women who came, but there surely were some.

Flight of the Mind was not our only project during those years. Judith was writing and having her work published, as well as teaching at other writing workshops around the country and in the U.K. I started a feminist press in 1985 and published poetry, fiction and nonfiction by American and British writers. And, in 1991, we were among the founders of Soapstone, an organization originally formed to provide a women's writing retreat in Oregon's Coast Range.

That work was just as important to us as Flight. Yet if we were to write about any of it (most of which continues), it





would include stories of the drudgery, long hours, and occasional frustration and disappointment, as well as of the successes, joy, and deep satisfaction.

Flight of the Mind was different. It required a lot of work and was not without challenges, but it was charmed. If the story told here sounds “golden” that’s because it was. Or at least that’s how we experienced it.

Judith and I set it in motion and were its mainstay, but hundreds of women—especially many of the staff and teachers, but also many of the writers who came—made it a story that needs to be told.

. . .

A clarification of terms: We have been accustomed to refer to Flight of the Mind—the whole program—as “the workshop,” and each individual workshop group as a “class.” But our use of those terms was always loose; “workshops” was also sometimes used to refer to the classes (as on the cover of the brochures). To avoid confusion here, we are using the former designations (“workshop” for the whole of Flight of the Mind and “class” for each week-long group) although the material quoted or reproduced from others may use a mix of “workshop” and “class.”

Contents

1	Our Wild Idea.....	7
2	What Would a Feminist Writing Workshop Be?.....	9
3	The Perfect Place.....	12
4	Getting Off the Ground: 1984 and the Early Years.....	16
5	More and More Women Came.....	20
6	The First Night.....	24
7	The Classes.....	27
8	And They Wrote.....	39
9	And They Ate!.....	51
10	The Staff.....	54
11	The Evening Readings.....	66
12	The Flight of the Mind Bookstore.....	72
13	It Was Just Us.....	75
14	Who Could Write All Day Here?.....	79
15	The Rest of the Year.....	87
16	Some Flight Traditions.....	91
17	The Rhythm of the Week.....	95
18	The Last Night.....	99
19	Leaving Day.....	102
20	A Few Stories.....	107
21	A Perfect Ending.....	119
22	What Remains.....	123
	Acknowledgements and Copyright.....	128
	Photographs.....	131

Group Photos (for the years we have them)

July 25 – August 2, 1987.....	143
July 24 – 31, 1988.....	144
August 13 – 20, 1989.....	145
July 29 – August 5, 1990.....	146
July 28 – August 4, 1991.....	147
July 26 – August 2, 1992.....	148
July 11 – 17, 1993.....	149
July 19 – 25, 1993.....	150
June 15 – 22, 1994.....	151
June 24 – July 1, 1994.....	152
June 16 – 23, 1995.....	153
June 25 – July 2, 1995.....	154
June 14 – 21, 1996.....	155
June 23 – 30, 1996.....	156
June 13 – 20, 1997.....	156
June 22 – 29, 1997.....	158
June 19 – 26, 1998.....	159
June 28 – July 5, 1998.....	160
June 18 – 27, 1999.....	161
June 27 – July , 1999.....	162
June 19 – 23, 2000.....	163
June 25 – July 2, 2000.....	164



1 • Our Wild Idea

RUTH

Seventeen years. Twenty-six week-long workshops that were profound, exhilarating...and, for some, life-changing. They were loved and cherished by many, Judith and me included, as well as the staff who worked long hours with skill and panache to help create the charmed world that was Flight of the Mind.

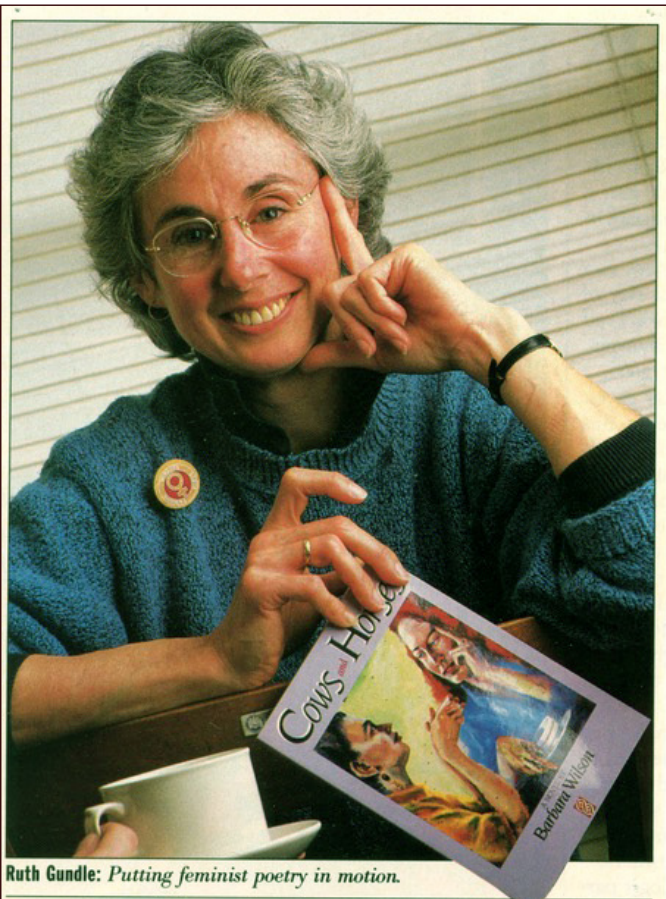
JUDITH

In 1984, when we hatched the idea, the formidable backlash against feminism was well underway. Consciousness raising groups, mass protests, and groundbreaking books were becoming rare,



leaving in their wake the hard work of writing and lobbying for legislation, running for office, and maintaining organizations.

Ruth and I had both been feminist activists since the early days of the Second Wave in the late sixties. In the seventies Ruth co-founded a feminist law collective and then became a litigation director for Oregon Legal Services, winning precedent-setting lawsuits and writing legislation on reproductive rights and violence against women, as well as teaching Women and the Law at Lewis and Clark Law School. I had been an activist in London, and a staff member of the Women's Liberation Workshop, which coordinated movement activities in England. After I came to Oregon in 1976, I joined the Women's Studies faculty at Portland State University.



By 1984, Ruth and I had been partners for five years. Ruth had quit lawyering and, swept along by the Women in Print Movement, gone on to become a small press publisher, founding the Eighth Mountain Press. I was working hard at my writing, while teaching poetry and publishing my work in literary, feminist, and gay periodicals, as well as writing op-ed pieces on feminist and gay rights for *The Oregonian*, many of which were syndicated to newspapers around the country.

Now that both of us were involved with writing, with books, and with aspiring writers, we started to muse about creating something literary and feminist: a high quality residential writing workshop for women of all ages and backgrounds.

Back then, in the world of writing workshops, feminism was largely unheard of or ignored. In my teaching, I had met women who had been stopped in their tracks by workshop leaders, usually men, who were dismissive of women's subject matter, and furthermore, often expected the women, if not to sleep with them, then at least to massage their egos. In the rare instances where there was no overt sexism, teachers often fostered an in-group atmosphere in which only a chosen few got any real attention. A scan of programs revealed that teachers were overwhelmingly male.

We were determined to apply everything we valued as feminists to every aspect of the program.

2 • *What Would a Feminist Writing Workshop Be?*

RUTH

Serious writing by women would be our focus. And we wanted the writers to make the kinds of connections with one another that would sustain them after the workshop ended. We imagined teachers, writers and staff mixing at meals, evening programs, the pool, or on hikes.

In the early 1980s when Flight began we assumed that a feminist writing workshop would be for women only, yet we intended to buck the



expectations of the women's movement, where clear structure was often questioned and high standards suspect as "elitist." We *wanted* structure and high standards. Feminist events had become notorious for wasting hours examining every wrinkle as a group—an exercise that rarely left anyone satisfied. None of that would happen at Flight. Everything would start and end on time, and decision-making and trouble-shooting would be confined to staff.

The food would be excellent, not just adequate; writers could have their own rooms; the teachers would be exceptional. Writers would work hard, some exploring

difficult material they could only do in a safe and supportive place. And they would also have fun.

They would set aside their obligations to children, partners, parents, home, work, and community to make writing their only responsibility for the week. Few women, we knew, had ever had that experience. It would be joyful, everyone would feel welcome, and the tone we—and the staff and teachers—set would bring out the best in everyone.



We would find a venue that would allow us to make it affordable. For those without the ability to pay we would provide scholarships.

And we wanted it to be in a beautiful place. Women deserved no less. In our wildest dreams we pictured it by the sea or on the banks of a river—being by water was important to Judith—and in a rural, if not wild, place.



JUDITH

The name Flight of the Mind came from Virginia Woolf, an important writer to me, who had lived at the foot of the Sussex Downs, not far from where I grew up. In 1940, with war raging in the air above her world, and the gardener's son fresh back from Dunkirk after rowing for five hours across the Channel, "the bullets

like moth holes in his coat," Virginia took what she thought might be her last walk. She recorded her thoughts from that day in her diary: "I wish I could invent a new critical method... more fluid & following the flight, than my *Common Reader* essays. The old problem: how to keep the flight of the mind, yet be exact."

We deliberately didn't use the word "feminist" in the name; we wanted the emphasis to be on the writing and the feminism to be implicit rather than explicit. And we didn't want to discourage anyone who didn't yet identify as a feminist from coming.



We would bring together as diverse a group of women as we possibly could, with respect to race, age, class, ethnic and national background, physical ability, and sexual orientation. (The concept of gender identity had not yet surfaced.)

We only put the word “feminist” in the brochure after two women from rural Washington arrived one summer, and left without unpacking, stunned and upset to find that it was not the kind of gathering for women they were familiar with; Ruth’s best efforts to allay their fears about “too many lesbians” failed to convince them to stay.

RUTH

How did we get away with keeping it for women only? Amazingly (at least to us) in all those years only one man applied. I had a good discussion with him by phone, explaining why it was important that it be for women only, and he graciously withdrew his application. I had not only been a

lawyer, but had taught Sex Discrimination at Lewis and Clark Law School for over a decade. No one knew better than I that public accommodations (which Flight of the Mind was) could not discriminate on the basis of sex under both state and federal law. We wholeheartedly agreed with this and yet felt that an exception could reasonably be carved out, even unofficially. Our plan was to wait and see if someone challenged it and then deal with it; no one ever did.

One year Betty Roberts, who had just retired as (the first woman) Justice on the Oregon Supreme Court, came to Flight. She remembered me from when I argued the case that required Oregon to pay for Medicaid abortions. We chatted from time to time but she never brought up the women-only question.



3 • *The Perfect Place*

JUDITH

From the beginning, Flight of the Mind was held at St. Benedict Lodge on the (officially designated) “wild and scenic” McKenzie River in the foothills of Oregon’s Cascade Mountains, midway between Eugene and Sisters. Ruth had heard about the place from a co-worker, and on a cold, drippy, February weekend in 1984 she and I drove the three hours from Portland to take a look.

Even on that dreary day we could see the possibilities. Nearby were scenic hiking trails, impressive waterfalls, hot springs, even lava fields.

It had been built in 1938 in a pleasing style with materials and colors that blended into its surroundings. We imagined classes being held in the rustic lodge, or out on the lawn. There was even a lovely old swimming pool surrounded by hedges and a tangle of flowers.

But the most striking, the most arresting feature was an immense terrace right at a bend in the river, where you could almost feel as if you were on a ship. We imagined writers eating meals on the terrace or curled up in a deck chair with a notebook, or just throwing open their windows and letting the sound of the river flow through their pages by day and their dreams by night.

The dorm rooms at St. Benedict were almost all singles, something we considered to be ideal for women, offering a refuge in which to write, sleep, and read. It had a large dining hall and a serviceable commercial kitchen; if we brought our own cooks we could provide abundant and beautiful food.

In the main building, which we referred to as “the lodge,” there was a wall of river rock with a fireplace large enough to walk into. Hand-some handmade wooden chairs—dating back to 1938—enough for an





audience at an evening reading, could be lined up in front of the fire. And although the place was a little dilapidated, we could imagine many ways to cheer it up. What it lacked (a sound system, enough dining room tables, some kitchen equipment) we could supply.

RUTH

It was not isolated, but completely private, with seventy-two acres of riverfront, forests of hemlock, cedar and

Douglas fir, and meadows of wild flowers, surrounded by National Forest—quite different from the college campuses where many writing programs took place.



St. Benedict was a Dominican retreat, used primarily by the order, but rented out to subsidize the upkeep. On our exploratory trip it was empty; we poked around until we found the priest in charge, to see if we could get on the calendar. All he had available were five days in September, so we took them. After that first year, we were able to score a week-long session during the summer and eventually, two week-long sessions back to back with a short break between.



JUDITH

We would grow to love the place in all its funky charm. The small rooms had been designed for monks; they had a single bed, a desk, an overhead light, a chair, and a large window. Some writers used them in that spartan spirit, others transformed them with colorful bedspreads, rugs, lamps, or a vase of wildflowers.

Each of the three dorm floors had a bathroom at each end with a single shower, but most women used the large communal shower rooms with shower heads on all four walls and hard-to-resist acoustics. They had the feeling of a sum-

mer camp but the water was luxurious—like standing under a waterfall. The evaluations were always full of bravos for the showers.



Every day after my early morning shower, I followed a trail through small Douglas firs that, over seventeen years, I watched grow from saplings to trees, adding their shade to the forest canopy. In later years, the brothers mowed a labyrinth into a meadow full of foxgloves, which I added to my walk.

One of my fondest memories is of the day one of the Brothers got on his riding mower and mowed a walking Labyrinth into the meadow across the road. I was so excited and proud to be the first person to walk it: daisies, yellow grasses and bracken up to my elbows. I found an old dry cow vertebrae that I still have. But also, the sound of the river at night. The best shower heads EVER in the common bath area. And I still make the shaved marinated cucumber salad that one of the chefs taught me to make.

—Katharine Salzmann

RUTH

Above all we loved the river. The terrace became our living room, our central square. We were drawn to be near the water whenever we could. It approached the terrace, headlong and roaring, before swerving below on its way downstream. No matter where we were, we could hear it—sometimes soothing, sometimes exciting. Its musical rapids carried us along and became the backdrop to everything.

There were no keys for any doors—something we failed to notice until a few women asked for them upon checking in—and none were needed. To live without keys for a week was something most of us hadn't done since we were children.

The second year we arrived to discover that the woman who worked as the custodian for St. Benedict's, a neighbor and goat farmer—and artist—had painted the flight birds, from our brochure, all along one wall of the lodge.

After the first few years we also rented nearby Cedarwood Lodge—seven lovely



pre-war knotty pine cabins across the river from St. Benedict—to house our teachers. They were very private, with river rock fireplaces and decks overlooking the McKenzie. This gave the teachers a quiet place of their own for the week. Teachers became attached to the cabin they were first given and always asked to have the same one again.



The Cedarwood cabins also provided us with accessible accommodations for participants, as the dorm rooms at St. Benedict were on the second floor of each of the three main buildings. Mike and Carolyn Giorgio ran Cedarwood to very high standards and loved having our teachers and students every summer.

JUDITH

At that time, the area was relatively unknown, even to Oregonians. You could hike to the serene Tamolitch Pool through a forest of old growth Douglas Fir (if you could find the trailhead; there were no signs) and never see another soul. We were lucky—and forever grateful—to be able to claim St. Benedict and Cedarwood as home to Flight of the Mind, many decades before the area was “discovered.” And long before global warming set the stage for the massive flooding in 2019 and the horrific wildfire in 2020 that stopped just a few miles from McKenzie Bridge. Back then our concerns were simple and immediate: would the weather be sunny, and if it were to rain, would it be a short spell?



4 • Getting Off the Ground: 1984 and the Early Years

JUDITH

That first year, there were just two classes—I taught poetry and Barbara Wilson (who later took the name Barbara Sjöholm) taught fiction. Barbara was one of the founders of Seal Press in Seattle, an important early feminist press. Her first book, *Thin Ice*, a collection of short stories, had been published a few years earlier; the first of her many mysteries, *Murder in the Collective*, had just come out.

She would go on to become an award-winning writer of biography, memoir, and travel books, as well as fiction, and a translator from Danish and Norwegian. Barbara, too, had a long history in the Women's Movement—as well as being a trailblazer in the Women in Print movement—and shared our passion to keep feminism alive.

I met Barbara when I interviewed her as part of a review of *Thin Ice* I wrote for a feminist newspaper. When Ruth and I started to conceive of Flight of the Mind we drove up to Seattle and asked her to take a chance on teaching with me that first year. Over dinner in the International District, she enthusiastically signed on.



RUTH

In 1984 Judith had already begun teaching a regular writing workshop in Portland that would become the 29th Street Writers and was co-teaching an occasional weekend workshop at the coast called “Getting Started as Often as It Takes.” She was working on her first book of poems, *Trying To Be An Honest Woman*, which was published the following year. She would go on to become an award-winning poet and memoirist, and a sought-after teacher of creative writing at independent and university programs all over the U.S. and the U.K.

A workshop is a ceremony with its own order, its own reality, its own time set outside of ordinary time.

—Ursula K. Le Guin



Cookbook. We set up and cleared the dining room, ran the commercial dishwasher, and made sure there was toilet paper in the bathrooms. We were giddy with exhaustion by the third day when we famously eyed the bottle of rum we had brought for Mollie Katzen's fresh peach and rum pudding cake, and things took a zany turn!

JUDITH

Twenty-two women came, responding to an ad in *Willamette Week* and notices I posted in Portland libraries. We were astounded by that first session: the writing that was produced, the beauty of the place, and the way a diverse group of strangers made deep connections.

There was the florist from Bellevue who arrived wearing a fur coat (it *is* at a slight elevation and the nights could get cold that time of year) and the brilliant writer who had been a dishwasher at Emmanuel Hospital for forty years at minimum wage while raising four sons. And there was the woman who swished down the spiral staircase to make a grand entrance for her reading wearing a red evening gown and rhinestone earrings, her hair piled on top of her head à la Ava Gardner.

That first summer I wore the hat of co-administrator, with Judith, and also assistant cook. Our cook was the legendary KE Edmisten—witch, tightrope stringer for Philippe Petit, and healer, later to become a naturopathic doctor. At Flight, KE's magic included ridding dorms of bats by writing messages to them on the bathroom mirrors.

KE and I worked nonstop sixteen-hour days, cooking elaborate meals for the vegetarians from the *Enchanted Broccoli Forest*, while cooking a completely separate menu for the meat-eaters from *The New York Times*



We had been confident we could reach the “women’s community” in Portland and Seattle—those connected to the web of feminist bookstores, newspapers, classes and activist groups that existed at that time—but we had hoped, in addition, to reach beyond it, and were thrilled when we did. They were a lively, fascinating bunch who worked hard and made headway with their writing, soaking up everything Flight offered them. We were pumped to continue.



RUTH

Evelyn C. White joined us in the third year to teach nonfiction and became a crucial and regular member of the teaching team. She was working then as a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*; Seal Press had just published her first book, *Chain Chain Change: For Black Women Dealing With Physical and Emotional Abuse*, soon to be a bestseller. She would go on to become an im-

portant biographer, as well as nonfiction writer. Both Barbara and Evelyn helped shape what Flight of the Mind would become.

The staff expanded in the second year to add two cooks—Mary Scott and Susanne Kredentser—remarkable women, who laid the foundations of Flight’s kitchen excellence and joie de vivre. Mary, like KE, became a highly respected naturopathic doctor.

Thinking back on those beginning years now, four decades later, I remember clearly how much fun we all had together. We were figuring it out as we went along and having a high time doing it, while savoring the excitement and satisfaction of creating something that had never existed before.



Flight grew steadily each year, adding teachers, participants, cooks and a crew of staff members. We made small refinements every year, but neither the feeling of the program nor its structure changed significantly after the first few years, although it grew from twenty-two participants and three staff members to eighty participants and nine staff members, for each of the two week-long sessions, in the final years.



5 • More and More Women Came



RUTH

They came from all over the country, a few from around the world. They ranged in age from eighteen to eighty-six. Many had never been to a writing workshop before; others had never been to a women-only event. Some saved all year to afford it, others thought the fee so low they included a contribution to the scholarship fund. The first three years we accepted everyone; after that, it was by application. Over time Flight became so sought-after that, in the last few years, we were able to accept fewer than half of those who applied.



We were looking for serious writers at all stages of development and a rich diversity of every kind. We asked for a short writing sample and a brief description of writing experience, accomplishments or goals. We made it clear that beginning writers would be included with more experienced ones. Usually it was the teacher who selected her class though very occasionally, when the teacher wasn't able to, it fell to Judith and me. By 1992 we had two, separate, week-long sessions, with a short break between; five teachers a week with sixteen participants in each class for a total, including staff, of about ninety-five per week.



JUDITH

In order to prevent an "in-group" of students following a teacher year after year (still common at many writing workshops), we didn't let writers apply for the same teacher two years in a row. We wanted Flight to be welcoming to all and for newcomers to have access to longtime teachers.





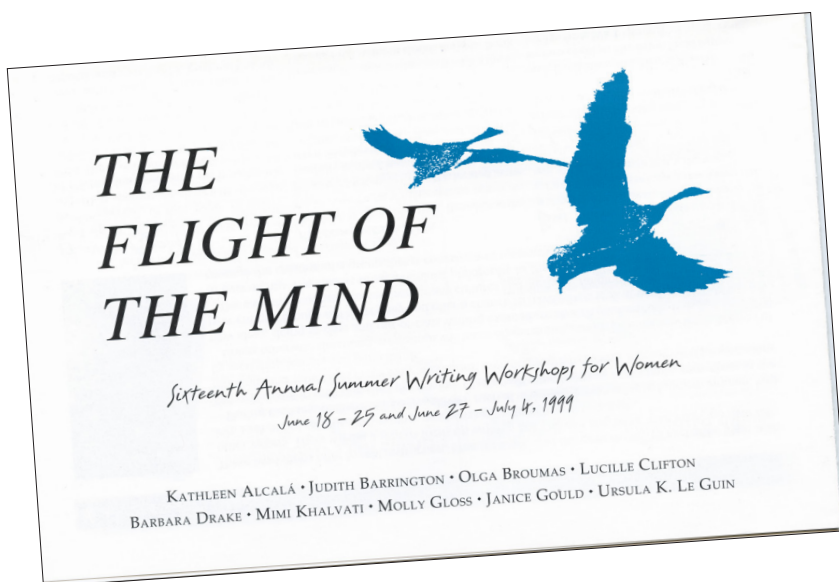
We kept the price as low as we possibly could. In 1984 it was \$300 for five days including accommodation and meals. In 2000, our last year, a full week was \$825. Writing workshops were then, and continue to be, a middle-class opportunity. At many, when scholarships are available, the recipients bunk together in the least desirable housing (while those who can afford to, have rooms of their own) or they must work in the kitchen or serve meals. We were determined to make Flight of the Mind available to poor and working-class women in a way that was invisible, offering them the same experience as everyone else. Ruth and I raised money throughout the year for scholarships.

Twenty percent of all who attended got financial assistance;

we encouraged those who wanted to return to be creative about their own fundraising. Long before the days of online crowdfunding, many came up with ingenious plans. Two women held an Indian feast, accompanied by readings and music, and charged friends \$10 to attend. Ayofemi Folayan



got on to *Jeopardy!* and won her tuition and more. Others requested donations for their Flight fund in lieu of birthday and holiday gifts.





We mailed our brochure to an ever-growing list; by the later years we were mailing about three thousand every fall. They were posted in women's bookstores around the country (when we started there were nearly three hundred; In Flight's final year only about a hundred remained; as we write this there are eleven), passed around from friend to friend, and shared in writing groups.



In addition to our own efforts, Flight also received a lot of publicity, both regionally and nationally, in feminist and mainstream publications.

New Age Journal

Networker

PEOPLE TO SEE, PLACES TO GO, THINGS TO DO • EDITED BY DAN FIELDS

For Writing Women

This summer, you can develop your writing skills in a community of women. The 14th annual Flight of the Mind workshops, held at an Oregon retreat center in the foothills of the Cascades, will take place on June 13-20 and June 22-29. The faculty includes several notable writers, such as Rosellen Brown, fiction writers Sarah Schulman and Charlotte Watson Sherman, and poets Toi Derricotte and Cathy Song.

The workshops offer formal instruction, time for work, evening readings, and the opportunity to exchange ideas with other writers. Also, you can take a swim in the pool, go



Sharing writing at Flight of the Mind.

Schumacher Scholarships

American citizens are eligible for scholarships at Schumacher

to five weeks in length, are taught by leading writers and thinkers such as Stanislav Grof, Rupert Sheldrake, Charlene Spretnak, Richard Tarnas, and Terry Tempest Williams. A scholarship includes the cost of tuition, accommodations, and meals (but not

contact Hilary Ni Schumacher Coll Old Postern, Dai Tattne, Devon T United Kingdom 011 44 1803 8 011 44 1803 8 e-mail schumac

Historic

4/15/95

The Oregonian

between the lines

Our SATURDAY reading on books and magazines



Evelyn C. White and Naomi Shihab Nye will be two of the instructors for this summer's Flight of the Mind writing workshops.

Women's writing workshop celebrates 10 years of quality

Twelve years ago, Portland literary pals Judith Barrington and Ruth Gundle started a summer writing workshop for women that seemed a rather ambitious undertaking at the time. Working with a small budget and targeting an exclusive audience didn't seem the ideal ingredients for success.

But it's amazing what a decade, hard work and a quality operation can do. Now expanded from one week-long workshop to two separate sessions, **The Flight of the Mind** has developed a reputation that attracts a national and international following. It takes place at a Dominican retreat center on the McKenzie River and costs \$600 per session, which includes lodging and meals. And this summer, the lineup is particularly strong.

For the week of June 16-22, the faculty includes Naomi Shihab Nye, Evelyn C. White, and Hilary Ni Schumacher. The week of June 22-29 features Rosellen Brown, Sarah Schulman, and Charlotte Watson Sherman. The workshops are held at the Flight of the Mind retreat center on the McKenzie River. For more information, call (503) 253-1111 or visit the website at www.flightofthemind.com.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 1997

The Living Arts

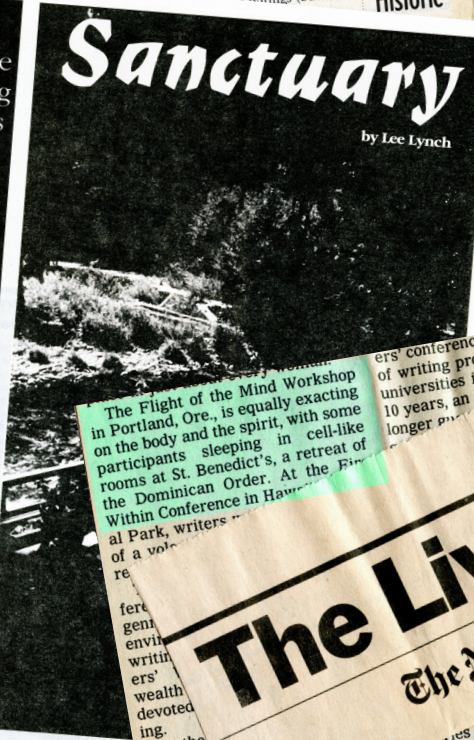
The New York Times

In Summer, Some Literary Lions Pause to Offer Guidance to the Cubs

Richmond to Rio.

Sanctuary

by Lee Lynch



The Flight of the Mind Workshop in Portland, Ore., is equally exacting on the body and the spirit, with some participants sleeping in cell-like rooms at St. Benedict's, a retreat of the Dominican Order. At the Flight of the Mind Within Conference in Hawthorne, Ore., writers gathered at a retreat center in a wooded area of a volcano.

In the summer grounds for

For centuries women have been stealing time from families and careers to write, hurling ourselves against the doors of the old-boy publishing establishment to get into print, struggling to find our own voices in a world that commands our silence. In that tradition hundreds of women, non-gay as well as lesbian, have for the past nine years fled the maddening patriarchal crowds to devote a mid-summer week to claiming a literary room of their own.

10 Lambda Book Report

6 • *The First Night*



RUTH

On the first night, after dinner, we'd all gather in front of the fireplace in the lodge, with the teachers and staff sitting on the hearth facing the writers. Unless it was unseasonably hot, we'd have a fire going. Judith would give a warm welcome and introduce the teachers, each of whom would say a few words of encouragement, advice, or whimsy. I would introduce the staff. The head cook and sometimes others would welcome the writers with wit and a few key bits of information about meals.

Then each woman would introduce herself with one sentence about being a writer. We wanted them to start the week claiming that identity. Many women were already comfortable with it: they had written extensively, were published, some even taught writing. But for others it was a new powerful statement. It could be a sentence about what they were working on, what they hoped to be working on, what they had written, what type of writing they did, or why they had come to Flight—anything about themselves as a writer. But just one sentence.



JUDITH

Our secondary motive was to encourage them to meet one another first as writers, rather than learning: she stays home with her kids, she's a doctor, she's a waitress, this one lives off the grid, this one's an electrician, etc. Often, none of those personal details came out until later in the week, if at all.

When Ursula Le Guin was there, she read "The Diversity Pome," which she wrote for this moment, when the room buzzed with nervous energy and most of the women needed their anxieties to be recognized and allayed. Anticipation of the unknown week ahead took many different forms but everyone needed a good laugh and to trust they were in good hands. When Ursula wasn't there, I read the "pome,"



Opening Pome (FotM 93 updated 2000)

Who are we, all gathered here, beside McKenzie's waters?
Some of us are mothers, and all of us are daughters.
Some of us are carnivores and some are vegetarians.
Some are heathens, some are witches, some are Presbyterians.
Some are waspy, some are ethnic,
 some are Jewish, some are goyish,
Some are oldish, some are youngish,
 some are girlish, some are boyish.
Some love memoirs, some love fiction, others only po'try,
One may be an acrobat, the next may be a notary,
One is good at calculus, the next at baking pie.
Some of us are lesbian, some straight, and others bi,
Some are very serious and others pretty flighty,
Some are quite monogamous and others like variety.
Some of us are noisier and some of us are quieter,
Some of us are ruder and others are politer,
Some look on the darker side and others on the brighter,
Some of us are hangin loose and others are uptighter,
Some of us are early risers, others up-all-nighters,
Some of us are peaceable and some of us are fighters,
Some of us eat lots and lots and some of us are dieters --
But -- for this one week on the river -- ALL of us are WRITERS!

tradition to end the evening: Judith would designate a part of the lodge for each class to gather for ten minutes so they could meet their classmates. Sometimes the teacher would hand out something to read before they went to bed or an assignment to work on in the morning if they had an afternoon class. Judith often gave each of her students a favorite poem to read before they went to sleep—just



to read; it was never discussed.

Naomi Shihab Nye asked her students to write a (private) pledge to themselves for the week. In response, ***Brittney Corrigan*** wrote in her notebook: “To write here without trying to impress, without worrying about the inadequacies—but to give the work freely, and listen openly to critique—to really hear suggestions before deciding whether or not to take them.”

Everything we did from the moment they arrived was designed to reassure them, help them settle in, and set them up for a week of writing.

JUDITH

Among my first night remarks was always this one: try to resist the impulse to gravitate towards those who you already know or who seem familiar; sit down at a meal next to someone you would not ordinarily be drawn to. For many this seemed to be a directive they had been waiting for. For others, it might be done self-consciously

which was slightly rewritten, and we thought improved, each year. This is Ursula's final version.

ANNDEE

I would give the first of my nightly announcements (where the showers are; a plea to avoid singing in them before breakfast even though the acoustics are hard to resist; quiet hour starts at 10 but the dining room is open all night with coffee and snacks).

It needed to be an early evening: some women had traveled all day or worked late the night before to get ready to leave for a week. So just one short



at first, but as the week progressed it would come to feel natural.

Regina Lo, my nephew's wife, is a five-foot-tall Chinese woman who had come to Flight from Hong Kong. One day in the lunch line, she began chatting with Constance Garcia-Barrio, a six-foot-tall Black woman from Philadelphia. Soon the two were conversing in Mandarin, a language they both spoke fluently.

From Nan Narboe, a white writer from Portland: "The late Vicki Sears, a Cherokee who'd grown up in a state orphanage, and I both adored the peach cobbler. I assumed I'd be welcome in the kitchen, which is how I got the recipe. Vicki, because of her life experience, assumed she wouldn't be, one of the many things we discussed during after-dinner walks that lasted until our skin grew damp and we came back inside."

On the first night Gish Jen gave us an immediate assignment that was to form the basis for our work that week: Before going to bed that night, we were to write down ten to fifteen situations that could turn into a story. "And then in the morning," she said, "pick out a couple that seem resonant and maybe start writing." We were going to write, and read to our group for critique, three complete stories that week! To many people's surprise, we came close to doing it.

—Nancy LaPaglia, from the class booklet of work written at Flight



For this nudge to mix, to not play it safe, to take some chances getting to know the other writers—as with every other aspect of Flight "culture"—we counted on the women who had been there in previous years to carry it forward.

7 • The Classes

JUDITH

As Ursula wrote in a letter to her students before they left home, “We are our own sympathetic audience, and can take risks that would be scary elsewhere.” In an all-women community, away from ordinary life and its routines and responsibilities, many different kinds of risk-taking were possible, from attempting humor to exploring painful memories to trying new genres, forms, structures, and styles. The environment itself was nurturing—the lovely voice of the river and the



gracious forests seemed to work their magic, even on the most cautious of city dwellers.



The teachers, of course, were essential for offering the writers security to venture out of familiar zones, and the spark for digging deep towards material that waited out of reach. We looked for teachers who were not just outstanding writers, but also women who would respect a wide range of abilities, encourage and challenge the participants, and be inspiring role models. Like the participants, the teachers came from around the country, including Hawaii. Several times we brought teachers from the U.K.

Some classes focused intensely on craft, some on “discovery,” but all of them included both.

Except for once or twice in the early years, when we tried manuscript critique workshops, all the classes were “generative”: participants created new work; previously-written work was not addressed. This prevented women offering work that had already been critiqued, a temptation for some who lacked confidence and wanted to make a good impression.



Usually there was a time for critique by both the teacher and the other writers, although in some classes, work was shared but not critiqued. In some, work was critiqued anonymously; sometimes work was read aloud by another writer in the class so that the author could hear it. For group critique of new work, we followed a set of guidelines compiled by Valerie Miner. Both Ursula Le Guin and I included them in our books on writing. They have been copied and used widely ever since.



By signing our contracts, the teachers agreed to honor principles that we spelled out, such as giving equal attention to each writer in the group. They were all paid the same, regardless of their stature, as they were all doing the same job.

RUTH

The classes were carefully developed by each teacher. Because in a group of women it was easy to identify with the experiences and feelings that others were writing about, it was sometimes necessary for the teacher to guide her group away from discussing the content and towards the craft. We took care that the content of women's writing, when they chose, would remain confidential to their small groups.

Teachers did not look at participants' writing outside the three-hour class sessions. This shielded them from the over-eager student who might appear with a handful of manuscript papers. Teachers could rely on our protecting their free time when they could take a nap, join an outing, read or, of course, write.



The teachers mingled with participants at meals, except for two lunch gatherings during the week for teachers only. There they could share with one another what they were doing in their classes or ask for help with a sticky problem.

Each week-long session included classes on poetry, fiction and nonfiction. But how our teachers approached those "bread and butter" offerings varied widely.



Fiction, as taught by **Gish Jen** would be quite different from **Fiction** as taught by **Lynne Sharon Schwartz**, **Helena Maria Viramontes**, or **Marjorie Sandor**, who also taught **The Life of the Story** and **Valerie Miner**, who also taught **Writing the Novel** and **Real Live Fiction**.

As conceived by **Ursula K. Le Guin** it might be **Writing Stories**, **Short Fiction**, **The First Chapter of Your Novel** or **Fantasy and Science Fiction**, or a session on narrative prose called **Steering the Craft** which was

I am impressed with the level of dignity given/allotted to each woman's work and the constant positive atmosphere to create, produce, and share writing.

—from an evaluation

later made into a bestselling book published by The Eighth Mountain Press, *Steering the Craft: Exercises and Discussions on Story Writing for the Lone Navigator or the Mutinous Crew*. One year, Ursula had her group invent a ceremony or ritual before they arrived which some or all of them might perform at their first meeting.

Fiction classes were propelled by the particular passions of the teachers, who included **Rosellen Brown** (**Finding a Form**), **Sarah Schulman**, (**Writing Through Reading**), **Andrea Carlisle** (**Transformation: From Autobiography to Short Story**), **Jewel Gomez** (**Short Fiction**), **Sandra Benítez** (**Writing from the Core**), **Kathleen Alcalá** (**The Arc of the Story**), **Molly Gloss** (**Fiction as Dream**), **Becky Birtha** (**Short Fiction**), **Charlotte Watson Sherman** (**Writing Fiction**), and **Terri de la Peña** (**Fiction in a Busy Life**).



Several participants remembered that Charlotte Watson Sherman, in her fiction class, gave them a series of exercises which gradually focused more and more closely on the body. No one was aware of the subtle progression until the end of the week.

One of **Barbara Wilson's** (later **Barbara Sjöholm's**) fiction classes was **Investigating the Mystery**. **Beth Brant** offered **Narratives and the Oral Tradition**, and **Gillian Hanscombe** taught





Facts, Feelings, Fantasies and Fictions. **Grace Paley** went simply for **Story-telling**, although each of her sessions was marvelously unique. One year, she had the women go around the circle and tell a story orally, rather than in writing. Then she had them go around the circle a second time, telling the story that the first one had been “sitting on.” There was much grumbling but by the end, they discovered stories that astonished them.

Most of the poetry teachers simply chose **Poetry** to name their class. They included **Toi Derri-cotte, Dorianne Laux, Allison Joseph, Lucille Clifton, Naomi Shihab Nye, Janice Gould, Cathy Song, Lucinda Roy, Elizabeth Woody, Aleida Rodriguez, Judith Barrington,** and **Mimi Khalvati.**

From Eleanor Berry: “I brought to Mimi Khalvati’s class a passion for prosody, which had been the focus of much of my scholarly work, and I was thrilled to find that Mimi had a similar passion. Her invitations for writing involved formal

parameters rather than subjects or themes—an approach based on the assumption that our subject-matter preoccupations would find their way into the formal structures. It was a time when I was emotionally quite vulner-

able; Mimi created an extraordinarily warm atmosphere in her workshop which was healing. Several of the poems that I began there found their way into my first book of poetry. I’ll always be grateful to Mimi—and to



Grace Paley’s writers, in 2000, compiled a list of sentences Grace had dropped into their sessions. The list included:

It’s the first impulse. When you’re a child you come in the door and say I want to tell you something. If you’re lucky, somebody says, What?

The telling of stories is always an invention; the second time the story is told it becomes fiction.

The thing that starts you is the thing you leave behind.

There is never a story unless there are two stories.

Other characters in a story shape your character. You don’t have to do all the work.

God had to make him into a good guy, not you.

No transition is better than a false transition.

When you don’t have action, dialogue is your action.

You’re never stuck, you’re just wrong.

Go ahead until you see the balance. The rest is spots on your shirt.

Don’t lie to the reader.

Life is actually a series of anecdotes.

Some things you shouldn’t explain.

It’s okay to be mysterious as long as you’re not lying.

You got enough concrete. Any more it’s stone.

Does anyone know what to do with these valuable clichés?

We want to love the world and have it love us. Sometimes we have to settle for loving the world.

Ruth and Judith—for creating an environment that helped me to re-focus my work onto poetry and to feel included in a welcoming community of writers.”

From Frances Payne Adler: “I learned I had breast cancer a few days before I was to leave for Flight of the Mind, to study with Dorianne Laux. Fear was like razor-wings in my lungs and eyes, and yet I packed and drove to the river to write. In my room the first night, I woke to the song of a bird, insistent, high in the trees, six discrete sounds and a refrain: *I promise you will live, you will live, I promise you will live, you will live.* In the morning I woke to the river rushing, the song, and the sun coming up slow as breathing and in the work-



shop a poem began to come through the tube of fear I'd been slipping into, one that would be central to my next book and to my recovery. Katy plinked the bird's song on piano keys. I whistled it to whoever might know, and yes, someone knew, it was a hermit thrush, a shy hermit thrush. My mother, Sybil, long dead, whistled while she walked, it was her voice, why not? In our group, I moved in and out of sadness, in and out of anger. I think of us now as a holding post, holding poems, swirling strength to each other. *Yes, your politics*, from Dorianne, *your fervor*, from Katy, *your will to live*, from Gish. My poem insisted its way up and out of my body. After I read it one evening, *your voice*, from Grace.”

From Janet Ploss, in her introduction to the booklet of work from Lucinda Roy's class: “In suffering there is always a place for glory.’ This is the first line of my class notes. Lucinda wanted us to explore

h o w
we and

how other poets “find joy in the seams of suffering.” She wanted us to embrace and use orality—the power of words spoken....in addition to learning prosody.... She wrote personal notes to each of us at the end. This is a woman with an enormous generosity of spirit. She made the class work for a group of women with widely divergent levels of experience in writing poetry.”



From Maria Eliza Hamilton Abegunde: “Oh, those days were some of the best in my life, they were my summers of love and discovery. When I was practicing the choral poem for Tammy Zywicki, Elizabeth Woody came upon me, quietly, and just stood and watched me. What she said to me has always guided the work I do: ‘You are responsible for opening and closing the circle.’ There was more, but this was the lesson. She was the first to recognize my work as ritual on the page, in its choices, in my performance.... She taught me about the vibration of language and sound, of the potential of my poetry to heal, speak to/through the ancestors, and to make audible and visible the unthinkable. I am forever grateful. The other year I was in Naomi Nye’s class. She ran outside with us one night to see the moon, she published my first works, and has always been an inspiration.”



JUDITH

Suniti Namjoshi taught **The Craft of Poetry** and I taught **The Music of Poetry** and **Poetry: The Committed Imagination**, a class on writing political poems. One participant remembers that in **Olga Broumas**’s **Poetry: Body Sound and Text** they were asked, after they had written a poem, to read it aloud backwards. The results surprised everyone.



From Katy McKinney: “We sat in a circle on chairs on the lawn that first sunny day in Naomi Shihab Nye’s poetry class. In a poem about a mastectomy the narrator asked what happened to breasts once removed. I remember thinking that my foxglove poem was frivolous in comparison, and was therefore inspired to write about the relatively late-term miscarriage I’d undergone. I wasn’t sure how well I could project while reading it; Naomi had everyone gather in super close while I managed little more than a whisper. It was healing and cathartic, and eventually became a good poem. Another day she gave us an assignment to write a non-traditional lullaby—not to a child, but to someone (or something) in need of soothing. I wrote one for myself in my 3-year-old son’s voice.”





In **Evelyn C. White's** **Writing Nonfiction**, writers often interviewed each other for lengthy profiles. She created two unique classes, **When the Rainbow is Enough: Writing Across Race** and **Lift Every Voice: Celebrating Diversity**.

From Mimi Maduro: "Flight impacted my life's trajectory; it deepened my awareness and writing and broke open my world view." She specifically remembers being part of "When the Rainbow is Enough": "The diversity of women and perspectives in this class, and what was discussed and revealed and written about still feels remarkable and palpable today almost 25 years later. Kathleen Herron and I talked about it for hours during

that week and for months afterwards. I couldn't have experienced the class as deeply if we hadn't had each other to live into the learning afterwards."

RUTH

Judith regularly taught **Writing the Memoir** which became the basis of a best selling book for writers, *Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art*. Both Judith and

Barbara Drake taught **Creative Nonfiction**.

From Roussel Sargent:

"I particularly remember, in Judith Barrington's memoir class, our discussion of Virginia Woolf's: 'And why, exactly, do we memoirists need to do

this work of reflecting—of bringing together the I now and the I then?' And the exercise: 'write a description of walking through a city, landscape or neighborhood, using first person and allowing the reader to



From notebooks of writers' in **Gish Jen's** fiction class:

Whose story is it?

How hard can you make the reader work?

How enigmatic or accessible should a story be?

Flannery O'Connor: If you don't surprise yourself, you won't surprise anyone else.

When telling a story in the first person, play fair in the dialogue—give all characters their share of good lines.

Sometimes keep writing after the ending and see what happens.

Gertrude Stein: The artist works by locating the world in himself.

No matter what you do, you can never bring all the audience with you.



get to know you, as a character (who is also the narrator) by how you react to your surroundings.”

From Catherine Johnson: “When I studied with Judith Barrington in 1993 I came to really appreciate the craft of prose. I was no longer a beginner when it came to generating material, but I had very little idea about how to make it better. I admired her skill and passion for form and style. In addition, her memoir *Lifesaving* inspired me to keep wading into the murky waters of my own story. That summer I started to believe that one day I could write it. And, I did.”



Other classes spanned the genres, like Andrea Carlisle’s **Reclaiming Eden: Writing About Animals**, Marjorie Sandor’s **The Spirit of Place**, Judith’s **Landscape and Memory**, **Michelle Cliff’s Memory, History and Imagination** and Toi Derricotte’s **Experiments in Nonfiction and Poetry**.

JUDITH



One year, Ursula and I created a cross-genre session we called **Rhythms of Writing**, focused on both prose and poetry. Ursula introduced the group to the rhythms created by regularly recurring imagery in famous novels, whilst I covered elements of metrical poems; late in our week, we both enjoyed the wildly imaginative and sometimes hilarious languages that we all invented.

We offered **Screenwriting** one year, taught by **Pamela Gray**. And once, **Young Minds: Writing for Children** taught by **Christina Salat**. **Word/Sound: Collaboration and Performance** led by **Carletta Wilson** and **Theresa Clark** helped participants move through their resistance to performing their work and have fun exploring improvisation.

From Anndee Hochman: “I remember that Carletta and Theresa had us write a short piece about an indelible incident of our pasts,

then take a single line from it and turn that line into a performance piece by experimenting with volume, pacing, silence, cadence and intonation. We also created a choral piece by interweaving brief excerpts from each of our responses to the prompt 'I come from.' Together, we juxtaposed them for contrast or amplification or surprise."

In the early years, the classes met in the lodge or on the lawn. In later years, when we had five classes per week, some met at St. Benedict's and some in teachers' cabins across the river at Cedarwood.

It was a mile's walk from St. Benedict along North Fork Road to McKenzie Bridge where, at that time, there was only a gas station/small general store and the Log Cabin Inn (built in 1885, burned down in 1906, rebuilt, and then destroyed by fire after Flight ended). Just beyond it, on the river, were the Cedarwood cabins.



RUTH

Only during a short period did preoccupations of the wider world and the women's movement reverberate at Flight. In the mid to late 80s we started to get writers pulling one of us aside and confiding that they hadn't expected to be "the only lesbian" or "the only heterosexual woman," often on the first day of classes. Clearly there was anxiety, amongst some at least, about whether it was "okay" to be whichever they were.

This surprised us. Judith and I were unconcerned about who was a lesbian and who was heterosexual and had no way of knowing exactly who was what or what the proportion was, but it was our sense that it was roughly half and half every year, from the beginning until the end. When we conveyed this, it would be met with some surprise.

This issue seemed to dissolve a year or two after Ursula Le Guin came to teach in 1989. She and Judith both read poems about the word "lesbian" in an evening program, Ursula's written in response to Judith's. Something changed after that. We thought it was because Ursula modeled how a heterosexual woman could be at ease in a group that was





not overwhelmingly heterosexual, and Judith modeled how it was perfectly fine to be lesbian in a group that was not predominantly lesbian. Ursula's "Opening Pome" was originally written to address this as well.

From Sue Scavo: "I remember being awed and scared. The roar of the river echoed what it felt like in my body to be there. Elizabeth Woody was an amazing teacher. Smart and clear. She talked about taking care of the body as well as

the heart as a writer. Had us noticing things—including the body—that was new for me. I remember not wanting to do the reading, feeling sick about it. How you, Ruth, told us that someone in the audience needed to hear our words. That struck me as so true because I had been that woman in the audience who was saved, over and over again, by another woman speaking, reading.



I still think about that moment when I go to teach or to do a reading. I remember what it was like to be a new writer in the presence of women writers deeply committed to their art. What it felt like to sit with Ursula at dinner one night when she talked about her translation of the Tao de Ching, laughing about her audacity. Talking with Naomi Nye about an upcoming anthology she was working on and

her inviting me to send some work. I remember what it felt to be taken seriously in that rare place. Not just as a student, but as a woman and a writer. That, just that, changed everything for me."





May 26, 1991

To the Short Fiction Workshopers:

We're going to be a real crazy quilt -- everybody's application story was totally different from everybody else's. This should be fun!

We'll spend most of our class time critiquing; talking(listening) about our work. The process is most valuable with new work, written for this workshop (and during it -- when the mind gets to flying, it's wonderful to write on the wing.) If you'll come with a new piece, we can start right in reading and talking about it, and use all our six days fully. So that we can arrive going slightly less than 13 different directions, I'd like to give an assignment. I'd like you to write a fiction that concerns ceremony.

What is a ceremony? A series of acts establishing sacredness; a social observance of celebration, of mourning, of a beginning, an ending, of change in the life of an individual or group. . . . Weddings, funerals, commencements, Thanksgiving dinners, political conventions, are institutionalized ceremonies, but ceremony and rituals occur in ordinary life, scarcely recognized as such -- board meetings, men talking baseball scores? If you like, you might write about such a "hidden" ceremony/ritual in a short story.

Or you might invent a ceremony or ritual. (I didn't say borrow, I did say invent. This is fiction!) Imagine it, and present it in a narrative, either a story or a pretended "objective account."

Or you might invent a ceremony or ritual for oral performance. (One thing I hope to work on with this group is the oral/aural element of fiction -- to emphasize the read-aloud-ability of narrative prose, and to encourage experiment and play with texts meant to be read aloud. This workshop is a great opportunity for playing! We are our own sympathetic audience, and can take risks that would be scary elsewhere.)

over

-2-

So, here's what I'm asking you to write and bring with you (if you can bring 15 copies of it, that would be wonderful) -- and it can be serious, or crazy, or both, or whatever you want --

A prose piece of 2 to 10 pages* (600-3000 words):
 --which is a ritual or ceremony of your own invention, **in words** (which you or some or all of us might perform);
 --OR which is a story about, or a pretended account of, an imaginary rite or ceremony, performed by human or other beings, past, present, or future, on earth or anywhere else;
 --OR which is a story involving actual, presentday ritual or ceremonial behavior which isn't generally recognized as such.

*"pages" always means double-space -- not single or 1-1/2. (Hexoxes: you can use 1-1/2 or even single-space to save paper, if you have clear black type and leave good margins for comments. Name and page number on every page please!)

Fiction is ceremony: it orders reality and makes it sacred by creating a time outside time.

A workshop is a ceremony, with its own order, its own reality, its own time set outside ordinary time.

I look forward very much to this time with you!

Ursula
 Ursula Le Guin





Some exercises from **Olga Broumas's** poetry class:

Write an "irreverent and fervent" prayer, each time you reach for a noun make it a verb.

Start with "because I could not stop for" and write slowly. When you are done, cross out the "because I could not stop for" and everything following it up to the point where you have a phrase containing a verb. Start the poem there.

If nothing is working, read the poem from the bottom up, either line by line or stanza by stanza. Try it both ways, write it down both ways.

Or read the poem using only every other line: write down the results.



LESSONS FROM LUCILLE

Relax, don't go looking
for images to claim and paste.
The world provides more than enough
without your peering eyes.
Remember:
it is the nature of what is hunted
to run away.

Truth and fact may be strangers,
so give up your plans
let the poem have its way

like a big brassy sister who's been there
before you,
travelled the ache of the original
path--
she can tell you a thing or two.

Andrea Potos
June, 1999



8 • *And They Wrote*



RUTH

They wrote in their rooms, they wrote on the terrace, they sprawled on the lawn writing. They took notebook and pen and sat on rocks by the river or hiked into the forest and sat on a log. Some stayed up late writing, some got up before dawn. They responded to prompts in class; between classes they worked on assignments.

They shared their writing, not only in their classes, but with other writers, in impromptu critique groups, and sometimes by taping it to the doors of their rooms. We actively encouraged them to look to one another, and not just the teachers, for

feedback. We hoped they would leave with new beginnings and new skills and perspectives to apply to their drafts. Perhaps even an almost-finished piece of writing.

JUDITH

We hoped, too, that Flight would provide momentum for the months ahead and some writing buddies with whom to exchange work, whether nearby or from across the country.

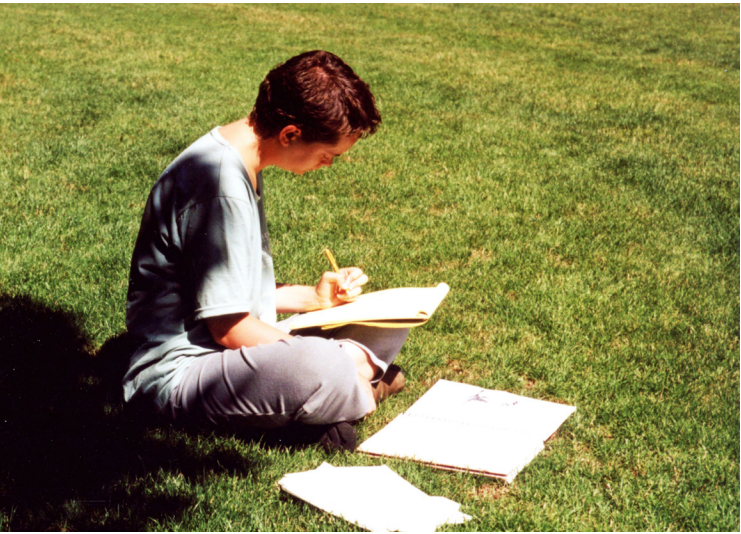


Much of the writing started at Flight would end up being published in a journal, an anthology or as a book. Many of the books won awards, became well known, or both.

We delighted in our participants' successes but we didn't draw attention to them at the workshop. We wanted a cooperative atmosphere, not a competitive one. There were no prizes given, no anthology of "the best" work from Flight, nothing that would have given special status to one woman's writing over another's. Apart from



Ruth offering an optional late afternoon session to answer questions about publishing—sometimes with Ursula, when she was there—we kept the focus of the week on writing.





Some were elegantly designed and produced when someone in the group had those skills.

Thirteen Moons on Turtle Island



A COLLECTION OF POETRY
THE FLIGHT OF THE MIND
JUNE, 1997 WORKSHOP
CONDUCTED BY
TOI DERRICOTTE



This booklet of work from Gish Jen's fiction class in 2000 was designed, produced, and hand sewn by Jan Priddy with artwork by Barbara Earl Thomas and introduction by Nancy LaPaglia.



*She told us to trust the process—
the need to let go and lie down, maybe take a nap
and allow our ideas to secrete...*



secrete: a compendium



Ground Cover



These poems were written by the women in Lucille Clifton's poetry class at a 1999 session of Flight of the Mind—a writing workshop for women held every summer on the McKenzie River in Oregon. Most of the poems were written in response to specific class assignments. All of the poems were written during the week the workshop was in session.

This chapbook is dedicated to each of the poets you see here—for their willingness to take risks together and to then commit those risks to paper. We also honor Lucille Clifton, whose true storyteller self pushed us to trust our own selves, pare everything down to the bare essentials, let the truth spill forth. While Lucille laughs at how folks seem always to be fooled, at least initially, into thinking she is "harmless", she is more pleased when those same people discover just how dangerous she really is. She knows how to shake us up.

Let us continue that.
Let us all be dangerous together.

Joanne Bealy

Lucille Clifton

To Lue at 10

"Take me to the river"
you would sing
in the Macedonia Junior Choir
and so I have brought you here,
Lue, and I rock and hum and
hold you inside, safe by the river,
fifty years late.

In 2 years everything you know
will break into dust and smother
your heart. I could say
"you should have known"
but I would be lying.
I could say "if I knew then"
but I would be wrong.

Is there an uncorrectable past?
Can poetry make it bearable?
We are gathered here at the river,
Lue, for poetry's sake and for our own.
It is called the river McKenzie.
Precious child, take my hand.



FLIGHT OF THE
MIND

POETRY FROM THE
SUMMER WRITING WORKSHOP
FOR WOMEN

June 24 -- July 1, 1994

with
JANICE GOULD

CALIFORNIA GIRLS

for Deborah

I didn't know I was lonely
till we began to talk,
you about the Mission,
book of names, photos
you discovered—
how each offered a mute clue
about your family,
Chumash ancestors,
things permanently lost.
I tell you about the lynching tree,
about the Maidu song my mother sang
in a scale I never could learn.

We've read that our people
were stupid, brutish,
primitive.
That they looked like monkeys,
lived like swine or dogs.

Your people were flogged,
tortured, mine removed at gunpoint
to homelands not their own.

We glance at each other,
fall silent. Americans
don't know these things.
Both of us know stories
we've never even whispered.

Suddenly you open your hand,
palm up, and I look.
"I've never met anyone,"
you say, "with hands like mine,
thick and wide."

I smile,
and open my palm too.

Janice Gould

CEREMONIES
STORIES FROM THE FICTION
WORKSHOP
FLIGHT OF THE MIND 1989

Sergent/Edge

McKenzie River Ceremony

Copyright 1989

(for the fiction workshop)

When the water gets to this place in the river after it's been over the rapids running straight towards the terrace it has to turn and go over something nonexistent that makes a wave. That wave is there, the swell up and the dip down, foam and shining. All the water that comes that way down that part of the river comes to that wave place and it does it. It is the wave. A wave is something that moves on but yet it doesn't: it is there, in that place, the wave place. In books it says that waves are really circles going round and round and round and round so that each part of the water does only one part of the circle and goes on. But there are no parts to water. I believe that waves are circles but I do not know it. I see the water that comes to this place in the river knows its duty: I mean it does something which comes out the same as knowing, and that is doing the right thing at the right time in the right place, which is when the water gets to the turning in the river after it's been over the rapids running straight towards the terrace where we sit going over something nonexistent that makes a wave. That wave is there now forever. That is forever. Or as near as makes no matter to a river.

Ursula K. LeGuin

Copyright 1989





Her
Tongue
Unwound

MACKENZIE RIVER

Driving down here I said Tell what you know about love
at this time in history and his tongue unwound
around the long loose rolling tires
so the women and men we had loved
stood far back as the blue mountains.
Blue vein, blue shadow streaked
by a thousand wishes
and life standing out better
when we're not quite anywhere in it.

So I was at home.
I was at home with the side of his face talking.

We passed stores selling all manner
of useless things, room in the world
for them too, and battered barns
and bushes and every license plate said OREGON
in one color or another and we had time.

Talk about time.

0 access road and overpass, we did not need you.
0 roadside rest stop planted with all the trees of the 50 United
States,
give me the slant, the seam of a cheek
speaking the words of the human tongue.

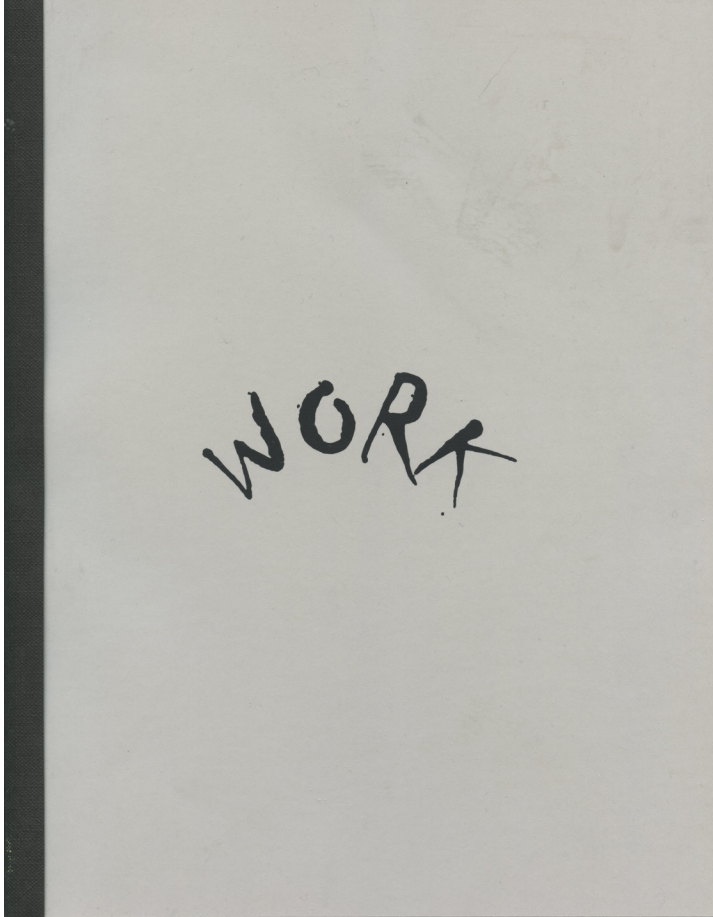
And one thing led. And we were headed south and inland
to the place where rivers roar and cedars tangle overhead
so closely the sky becomes a hint. A rumor: Once I heard
there was a sky.

And were you in it? We were in it.

Later the swirling river took our stories farther on downstream.
I could have told you about the sliver, the flash, the fin,
the skin that "or" was made from.

--Naomi Shihab Nye





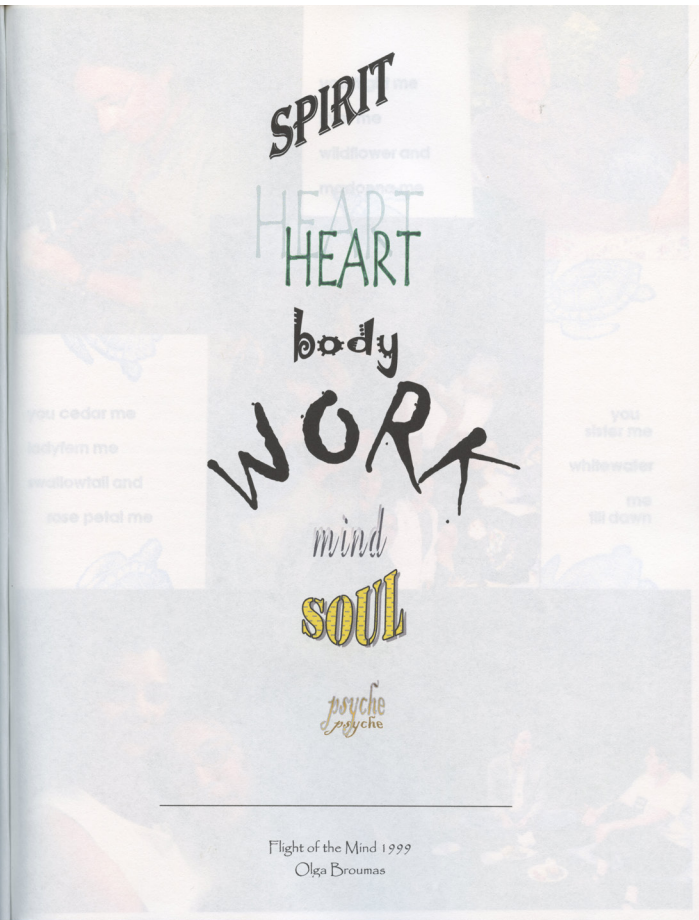
you flight me
river me
wildflower and
madonna me



you cedar me
ladyfern me
swallowtail and
rose petal me



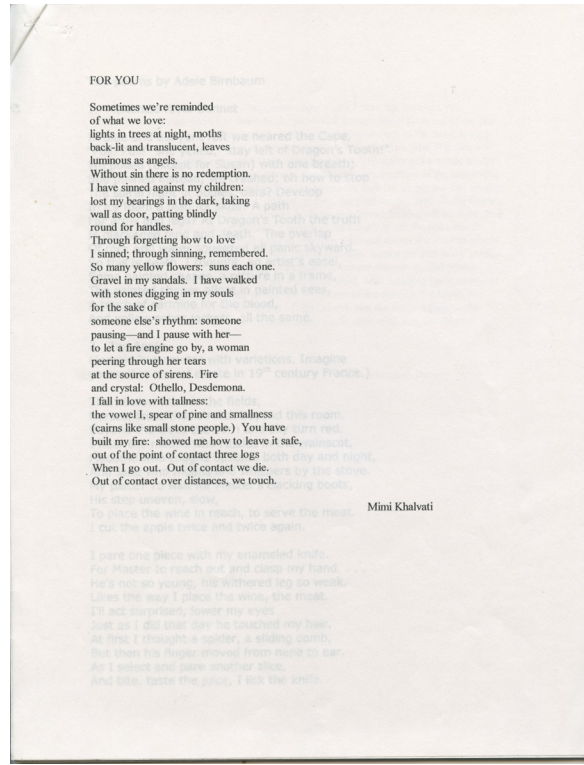
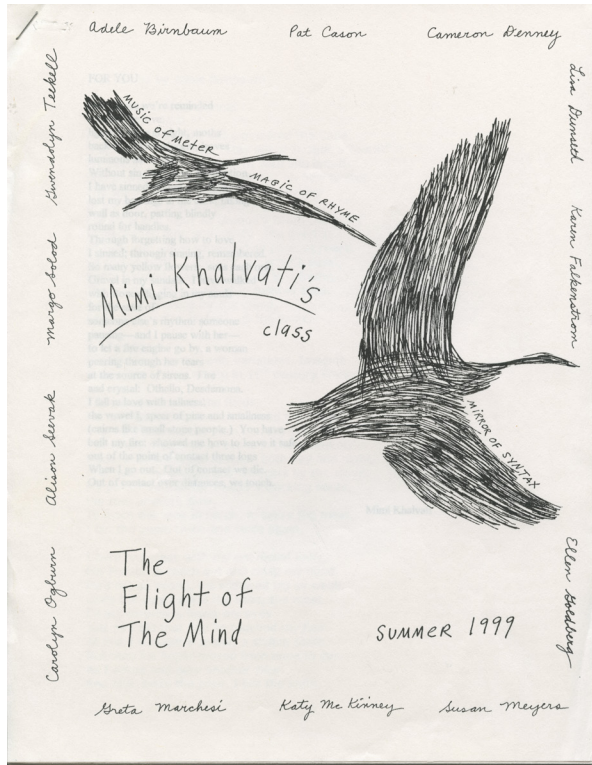
you
sister me
whitewater
me
till dawn



Flight of the Mind 1999
Olga Broumas



Some were beautifully handmade, like this one from Mimi Khalvati's poetry class in 1999.

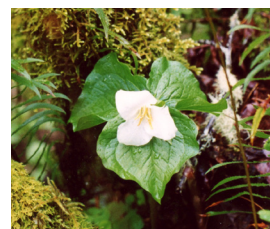
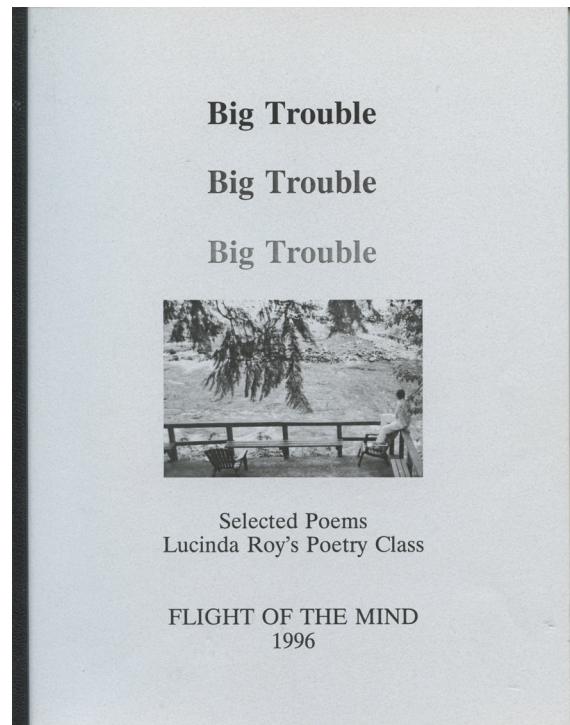


In keeping with Flight's resolve to not elevate any participant's work above any other's, we have selected only work by teachers from the booklets. Their work is being used with permission—please see copyright notices at the end.

Many of the poems included here cost the writers dearly. Many of them are simply stunning. What is remarkable about the collection is not so much that women were willing to experiment, or that they were willing to tackle subjects which took them on journeys whose outcomes they could not predict, or even that they managed to produce such extraordinary work in a week. What is most remarkable about this class was...that they were willing to try to speak from within circles of doubt about situations, events, or states of being for which there were no easy answers.

They listened to one another. They listened to the pauses between stanzas and the inflections in the words spoken.... And we laughed often because it was just so good to be together, in spite of the demons we were fighting, and the injustices we raged against as women, friends, daughters, and poets.

—Lucinda Roy, from the introduction to *Big Trouble, Big Trouble, Big Trouble*



RUTH

Much was written *about* Flight. There were poems about the river. Poems of thanks. Odes to the showers, the forest, the evening readings. Essays about the food.

AFTER LISTENING TO JUDITH READ, TALK ABOUT MEMOIR
out onto the deck, looking for starlight,
I stand by the river's edge
watching the water, pulled as it is
Its lulling voice carries
me, rilling
the bottom,

Full
The first day and already we are full.
- Naomi Shihab Nye

Don't you know
what you do for me? Nourish
that ache in my belly that
for the nine-grain
I ignore d

for Grace
Hope is only action
She told us: we, all bright eyes eager to figure out living
From someone who, face it, has lived so very long.
And we are all so despairing, in our young-lived busyness
All wondering where to find the time for p
Rolling back our busy young eyes when we
any lists and with one hand driving
ing, we never have an
and politics

Leavetaking
For Naomi Shihab Nye
Gratitude piles up
around her,
Like stones on the grave,
Rock upon rock.

For Grace, at the McKenzie River
I dream we're in an airplane. You're in the cockpit, a ping-pong-
playing muse with the belly laugh of a bubble that makes your
shoulders shake. "I think I'll take you for a little ride," you say and
with you, fourteen wild-eyed, cold-pancake-eating
ve to change their jeans every day.

ng of the way you lean forward when we
stand the pounding of water rushing over
inary life. "Tell your story, tell your story."
Thabo

*A Thank You Poem
For Ruth*
Blessed are
the Peacemakers
for they shall
have Elbs on
the drumsticks
Judith

one way of looking at it
---for Judith and Ruth
at the end of the week, when the smell of the river is high
as its sound, only the pine gum more pungent
light rushes over the morning stones, darkening past the island
one woman writes, another stops, two huddle together reading
the floor of the porch softens with drops
the air is cool and the sun is
we work best
to appear?
rch

one more river poem
the thing that surprises, when you
finally let the river in, when you finally
really look (you have to
look while breathing deeply,
for the voice underneath the
that you know, the one that
it is a single sound)
is the way the eddies dip
in a white foam cacophon
to assert their individual
daughters of different m
and then, if you listen f

FLOWING HOME
Some of us are plowing home. Some of us on the prow of the great green
dorm-ship are sleeping our way home. Some of us sleeping. Some of us
are plowing, heads down, sweating and groaning, some of us are plowing
home. Some of us are growling, some of us, looking side to side at other
people's bones. Some of us growl
of us are groaning. Some of us
heads down and sweating, are g
moaning, moaning our way home
green dorm-ship are droning our
droning. Some of us, some mo
lifting our tails in the tall green
plowing, some of us. Some of us are strolling, strolling our way home.
Some of us out on the grass at the foot of the great green dorm-ship, some
of us lolling our way, lolling and strolling, some of us. And some of us are
prowling. Some of us out in the tall green grass are prowling. Prowling
and howling our way, howling away, howling and howling, some of us. All
of us getting there, plowing or sleeping, groaning or growling. All of us
moaning. All of us droning. All of us lowing and strolling, lolling and
prowling, all of us howling. All of us. Howling and howling on the prow
of the great green dorm-ship, taking us home, taking us up the grey green
water, taking us, all of us. All of us. Taking us home



9 • *And They Ate!*



RUTH

Three delicious meals a day, with coffee, tea and snacks at all hours. We brought our own cooks to provide healthy, attractive, and tasty food, served on time not only to make sure morning and afternoon classes could keep to their schedules, but also to provide essential reassurance to writers who were away from their lives, in the semi-wilderness, taking their writing to new depths.

Meals were served buffet style and the tables were heaped high. This abundance, too, was reassuring, as there was nowhere else for miles to get good food; the little store at the gas station in McKenzie Bridge sold soda pop and snacks and the Log Cabin Inn offered fried meat with frozen vegetables and mashed potatoes out of a box.

At breakfast and dinner the dining room was bustling—a chance for participants and teachers to mingle with those outside their own classes, to swap anecdotes, breakthroughs or struggles in their writing and to form new friendships. For lunch almost everyone chose to take her plate and eat on the terrace. You could also take your meal to your room if you wanted to keep writing, or take it to a private spot and write or read with your meal. Some women said that they came just for the food; it's almost believable. It was that good.

ANNDEE

We cooked nearly everything from scratch, using fresh produce and high-quality ingredients, baking our own bread, whisking our own salad dressings, culturing our own yogurt by the gallon. We even made our own chutney and barbeque sauce.





Our menus were creative and eclectic, including dishes that were familiar to some while challenging the palates of others. One night we served Indian food: chicken and vegetarian curries, lentil dal, cucumber-yogurt raita and peach chutney; other nights featured a Mexican, a Middle East, and a barbecue meal. The last night was pizza—not only a popular choice but a way to use up any remaining zucchini, onions or peppers. There was always dessert: fresh baked cakes, brownies, cookies, fruit and berry cobblers—with whatever was leftover put out as snacks for the late-night writers—and fresh fruit for the non-sugar eaters.

Breakfast was sometimes scrambled eggs and biscuits, pancakes, or French toast, but always there was a giant pot of hot cereal with yogurt, granola, and fresh fruit for toppings. Some mornings we'd make coffee cake or banana bread. It was traditional to make cinnamon rolls for the last breakfast; we'd wrap up the extras for women to take with them for a last bite of our cooking on the way home.

Lunch always offered a full salad bar with a changing variety of chopped or sliced fresh and cooked vegetables, beans, olives,

sunflower seeds, hardboiled eggs, etc., and three choices of dressings. There were al-

ways fixings for sandwiches: fresh baked bread, sliced turkey, cheeses, lettuce, tomato, hummus, tuna salad, herbed cheese spread. If it rained we made something hot, like mac and cheese or a minestrone soup. Fresh fruit for dessert: peaches, grapes, apples, nectarines, apricots, watermelon.

We accommodated a smorgasbord of dietary restrictions; every meal was planned to include vegetarians and vegans, and tweaked each week, depending on the list of food allergies and requirements we were given.

At each meal, two members of the staff would don our “good” blue aprons and stand behind the buffet tables to greet women



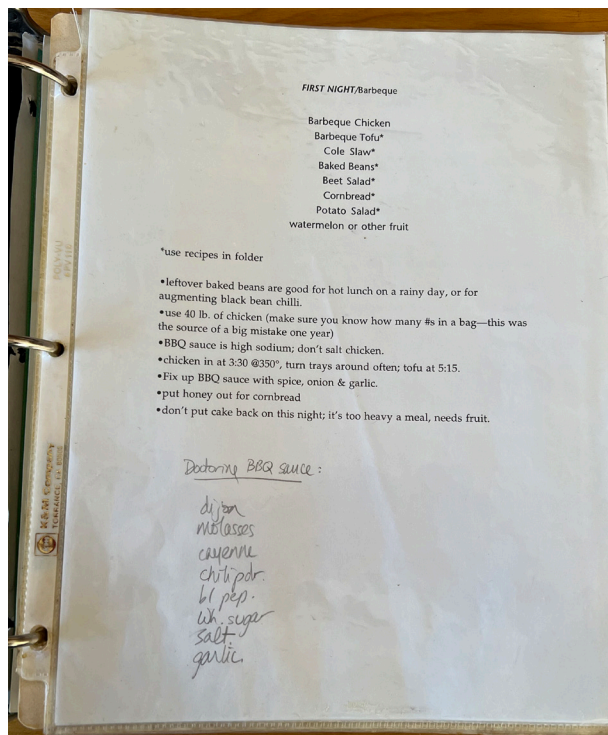
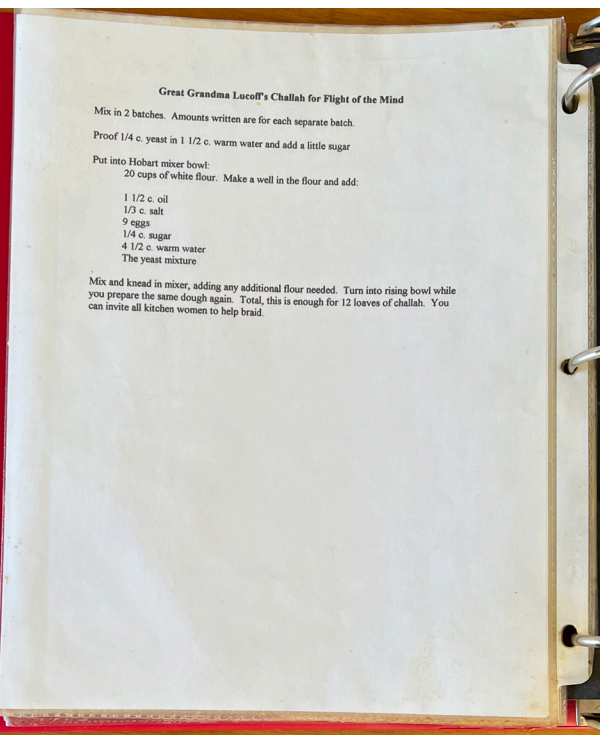


as they came through the line, answer questions and replenish food as needed. The writers and teachers ate heartily. Sometimes they asked for recipes or taped poems or notes of gratitude to the kitchen door.

We often mused on the idea—half seriously, half jokingly—of putting together a Flight cookbook of our recipes for ninety-five with a calculator in a pocket on the front (with sales to benefit the scholarship fund).



We never did that. But for anyone who is curious, either to see the recipes or to see the planning, organization, and preparation that went into producing those three meals a day, for ninety-five hungry women, for seven days at a stretch, a PDF of our big red three-ring binder, the Kitchen Bible, is available for downloading. It includes notes handed down from one year's cooks to the next, and although much of what's in it will be of no use to you (how to bake in the huge, ancient and cranky St. Benedict ovens, which hotel pans to use for the cobbler) it is, in its entirety, a treasured Flight document we've chosen to preserve for history.



10 • The Staff



JUDITH

Our staff grew through the years from Ruth and KE and me to a crew of ten. We had a head cook, an assistant cook, three prep cooks, and two dishwashers, as well as Anndee, Ruth and me. Legendary head cooks were Elissa Goldberg, Kelly Myers, Char Breshgold and Susanne Kredentser. Many took time off

from their jobs at some of Portland's fanciest restaurants, (Kelly was chef de cuisine at the storied Genoa and then became chef de cuisine for Xico; Char and Mary Davis cooked at the award-winning Zefiro; Rebecca Gundle became the pastry chef at ClarkLewis.) Key staff members were KE, Mary Scott and Rebecca Shine in the early years, and Cathy Brown and Claire Smith, who were staff members for more than a decade. Rebecca Gundle and Madeline ffitch, good friends since babyhood, came to work as dishwashers at the age of fourteen and ultimately became prep cooks.

These extraordinary women cared deeply about the success of the workshop, worked hard, and came back year after year because they loved being there and being an essential part of Flight of the Mind. Many were writers themselves.

Ruth and I did the planning, publicity, hiring, financial duties, and organizing ahead of time. During the last nine years Anndee Hochman joined us to help in the days leading up to and during the workshop. We could never have done it without her. In addition to her organizational and interpersonal skills she brought a flair for the visual, highly developed writing skills, calligraphy, and her love of Flight of the Mind.





RUTH

The day before the workshop we'd pick up a U-Haul truck and a few of the staff would load the nonperishable supplies, along with our sound equipment, tables for the dining room, books, trays and baskets for the buffet table, and boxes and boxes of kitchen equipment—we brought our own vacuum air pots for coffee, hot water dispensers for tea, and cold-water dispenser—all stored in our basement. There was a lot to load, including, in the years before lap tops, my huge computer and even bigger printer.

A few of us would make the epic Trip to Costco, filling up the rest of the truck, leaving room for one final early morning trip to the produce warehouse down by the river, where we would pile in dozens of cases of peaches, plums, bananas, pears, strawberries, rhubarb, lettuce, green onions, potatoes, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, parsley, green peppers, tomatoes...you name it. A separate driver would pick up the bucket of tofu and 150 pounds of frozen meat.

We'd caravan the three hours down to McKenzie Bridge, full of anticipation. In the earlier years we arrived the night before and had dinner together and a good night's sleep before the workshop began the following day. In later years, in order to have two full week-long sessions with forty-eight hours in between, we would start at 7 a.m. picking up perishables and arrive at St. Benendict's around noon on the day it began, with only four hours before the participants were allowed in. During that time, the staff transformed the rustic retreat into a colorful, welcoming space, with fresh flowers, batik bedspreads, calligraphy signs, the religious iconography discreetly tucked away.

We'd caravan the three hours down to McKenzie Bridge, full of anticipation. In the earlier years we arrived the night before and had dinner together and a good night's sleep before the workshop began the following day. In later years, in order to have two full week-long sessions with forty-eight hours in between, we would start at 7 a.m. picking up perishables and arrive at St. Benendict's around noon on the day it began, with only four hours before the participants were allowed in. During that time, the staff transformed the rustic retreat into a colorful, welcoming space, with fresh flowers, batik bedspreads, calligraphy signs, the religious iconography discreetly tucked away.

ANNDEE

In 1989, my partner Elissa Goldberg cooked at Flight and I took Evelyn White's nonfiction class. Though I'd been a journalist, covering metro news at *The Washington Post* and later, writing magazine features for *The Oregonian*, I felt petrified on the first day of class, worried about whether I could live up to Evelyn's mantra to "tell the truth." When it was my turn to read aloud, my





hands left moist spots on my pages—tapped out on an electric typewriter in those pre-computer days.

But an essay I wrote in that class, about coming out to my family, became the seed for my first book, *Everyday Acts & Small Subversions*, which I developed and published with Ruth's Eighth Mountain Press. I spent that first Flight summer nervous and exhilarated, clinging to every word of every conversation and savoring the high of the community for months afterward. The next summer, I returned to take Theresa and Carletta's 'Word/Sound' class, which nudged me further out of my comfort zone.

In later years, as Ruth's right-hand woman, my role included everything from brewing coffee at 6 a.m. to making announcements at evening programs, introducing some of the teacher readings, and fielding all manner of requests from participants: Could I have an extra pillow? (Sure, I'll bring it up.) Is there sugar in the brownies? (Definitely.) Can you do something about the squirrel in the shower of building B? (Umm...I'll work on it.)



In the later years, the staff camped in a secluded meadow. There, we'd drift off under a star-spangled sky, musing about the next day's breakfast menu. Do you think we should have French toast or banana pancakes? Elissa would murmur before she fell into an exhausted sleep. Mornings came soon—a 5:15 wake-up. The field would be soaked with dew, an early mist rising from the river, as we padded to the bathroom. After serving breakfast, we sat down to eat together at one of the terrace tables, checking in (last night's odd dream, whose back or calves were aching and needed a quick massage, a jackrabbit spotted on an early morning run), then talking through the menu for the day, with the head cook handing out assignments.

The kitchen buzzed from dawn until 10 p.m. with slicing, kneading, sautéing and dishwashing, along with lively conversation about the previous



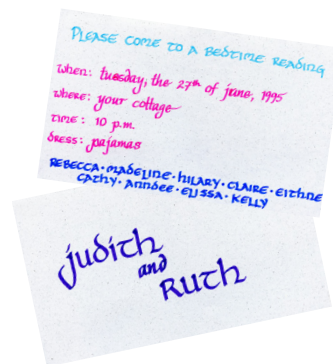


night's reading or "the question of the day," which we took turns posing: "If you could invite any three women from history to a dinner party, who would you ask, and what would you serve?" We cleaned up quickly after dinner, grabbing plates so we could eat while listening to the evening reading, even if that meant returning to the kitchen afterward for one final mopping of the floor.

RUTH

The staff maintained

their own parallel universe, inventing amusements and special treats for one another. One year Char, Kelly and Rebecca wrote a hilarious performance piece for the delight of the staff. Head cooks could be surprised with a decorated apron or a bouquet of wildflowers. One year they invited Judith and me to a bedtime reading in the ramshackle cabin where we slept amid crates of books. They marked Flight's significant anniversaries with cards signed by the staff, participants and teachers. A recurring source of entertainment, expressed, in part, in playful food labels, was our dedication to accommodating everyone's food allergies, aversions and idiosyncrasies.



The teachers and participants were aware of the central role of the staff. One year, when the staff were sleeping in a big dorm room, Grace Paley read them a bedtime story every night once they were in their jammies and tucked in. During the later years, we brought down a masseuse, Katharine Salzmann, herself a poet, to give the weary staff massages during the break between sessions.

Many staff members shared their memories for this history of Flight.

Elissa Goldberg

"I didn't sleep the first full week that I was head cook at Flight of the Mind. Night after night I lay in my sleeping bag, my thoughts as loud as the river. It's not like I was lying there planning, though maybe some constructive



thoughts emerged. I was being vigilant, warding off disaster: burned loaves, unyog'd yogurt, food poisoning, breakfast an hour late. (None of those things happened although one year a large bowl of tomato sauce went crashing off the side of the table, turning the kitchen into

what looked like a murder scene.)

Some things I loved, from **Elissa Goldberg**:

Waking early, when the air was still cold. My route to the kitchen always included a stop by the river, to take in its roar.

Flipping pancakes on that huge griddle.

We talked a lot and we laughed a lot.

I loved the weekends between groups. When we were lucky, the teachers would remain at camp with us. One year, Grace Paley stayed with us and I will always cherish washing dishes with her after dinner one night.

Spending the week with such a delicious group of hard-working, committed, funny, smart, caring women.



“I remember arriving at McKenzie Bridge after a long drive. Within a few short hours, we’d turn that space from a drab, orange-and-gray institutional room into a colorful, warm kitchen filled with interesting women and comforting smells.

“One year I baked some biscuits that I’d prepared the night before and they didn’t rise. They came out of the oven as flat as hockey pucks. I couldn’t serve them and started to slide them into the trash just as Ruth came through the door. ‘What are you doing?’ She was horrified. I explained that I couldn’t set them out.

They weren’t biscuits, they were door-knobs. Ruth said, ‘There’s no time to re-do them and...they’re delicious! We’ll serve them as something else. How about French breadcakes?’ Anndee lettered a sign, piled them into a basket and placed them on the breakfast buffet. They were gone in twenty minutes and women knocked at the kitchen door, wanting more. A few asked for the recipe.

“What I so deeply appreciate about Flight of the Mind is that Ruth and Judith worked to make every aspect of the workshop excellent. The teaching was as important as the writers’ physical comfort. The food was as important as the writing. The experience of the cooks was as important as the experience of the participants and the teachers.”

Claire Smith

“It was really hard work—I like hard work—and I liked doing that hard work so women could do their writing. We camped in the



meadow in the later years and one summer it rained for an entire week, so we slept in the laundry room and even that was fun. It was the camaraderie, being away from our daily lives, and working together for one purpose: supporting women writers. The evening readings were amazing. We would come in with our dinner plates, sit in the back on the stairs or on the couch. It was a time to be part of the workshop that wasn't about cooking and cleaning."

Julie Huffaker

"We created visual and tactile ways to communicate in the bustling kitchen



to make sure Cathy knew when a hot tray was coming out of the oven. One time we all talked long and deep with her about what it was like to be non-hearing. How much she loved letting go of being responsive to sound, to others, to their needs and urgency. How peaceful it was to be in a world with her hearing aids turned off, in her own mind, able to ride the buffer between self and other to make more deliberate choices. Cathy's view forever changed my perspective on those whose sight and hearing is different than mine, and on my own sight loss as someone who is legally blind."



Rebecca Shine

"Thirty years later I remember vividly the optimism, the joy, the chemistry, the adventure, the possibility of it all. The women and the readings and the words and the work. It made me feel alive and female and like the lesbian I wanted to be but wasn't yet living. I was meeting women who would be lifelong friends."

Susanne Kredentser

"All these years later (thirty-six?) I can still see clearly the kitchen, the dining room, and the walk-in cooler. And the river. I will never forget how we cooked with infinite variations—with garlic, without, with onions, without, with and without dairy, no mushrooms, etc. It never felt like a chore and that was because we worked together so well, had so much to



talk about, and it was like a dance.”

Mary Scott

“Several days before take-off on my first tour with the Flight kitchen (that amazing geometrical ballet of fitting food boxes and kitchen gear and dozens of delicate baskets into vehicles at dawn) I went canoeing at Sauvie Island with a friend and came home with a punctured foot from a misstep. Oh, the look on Ruth’s face when I came to their house on crutches, my swollen foot encased in a tennis shoe cut to fit. Between the late hour to find a sub and my enthusiasm for the adventure, Ruth and I agreed to give it a go.



“Little did I truly know that first summer the labor of love entailed in cooking for brain-and body-hungry, very appreciative women writing in fresh air! Somehow (the wonderful caring from absolutely everyone, the *a/ways* outstanding camaraderie in our kitchen dance, the inspiring evening readings, the clean waters of the McKenzie) my foot healed while standing most of dawn to dusk.

“What a rhythm...wake, set out coffee and tea, bake, stir cereals, fix eggs, cut fruit for breakfast, lay out a lavish buffet. Nibble, get right to making lunch, lay another spread, prep for dinner. Rest, read, swim, sunbathe nude at the pool for a quick refresher before dinner, cleanup, some prep for breakfast. Eat, slip into the lodge for readings, bed.



“Flight was so sparkling in its clarity and deep intent. Ruth and Judith in their oversight and attention to every detail, young Elisa with her careful meal planning and loving leadership, the buzz of women hard at creative work, the sweet kitchen friendships, sliding into the crowded lodge to hear freshly risen stories and poems.”

Mary Davis

“It was serious cooking. I remember how flattered I was to have taught two extraordinary cooks something: Char still says that I taught her how to make properly salty pasta water and Kelly gave me accolades for being able to take American food, transition it to Mexican, and then on to Thai.

“I loved the evenings listening to the writers: I was often so energized I stayed up late despite the early morning hours. I remember how brave it felt, as a pretty recent transplant from Ohio, (and how safe) camping in my own tent by the river night after night. I can almost still hear the sound of the river. It was a fantastic experience. I think of it as a big pillow of warm memory love. I can see Rebecca’s and Madeline’s young vibrant faces. I read about the teachers and participants in the news and have handed down the many signed books from Flight to my sons.”

Char Breshgold



“While I knew Ruth and Judith before I worked at Flight and knew all of us were feminists it never really occurred to me what a feminist run organization might feel like. I had been in a feminist collaborative art-making group in the 1980s, we made great art but our process was largely modeled after our art school training. When I came to Flight in the late 90s I had waited tables and cooked in restaurants for about fifteen years. While some of those were women-owned or managed, the hierarchy and sexism was blatant.

“Flight was so different. I remember being in the first staff meeting we had daily after breakfast. When Ruth went around the circle checking in with all of us and asking how we were doing I automatically said ‘fine.’ I realized after a few days that she really wanted to know how things were going, to address problems right there and then. What a concept! I’ve thought about this style of management in every job I’ve had since and tried to model it when I was a supervisor.

“We gave appreciation for our co-workers in the kitchen. I remember feeling awkward and uncomfortable having to do this when I was head cook, especially when I was struggling with a cook who was very much in over her head, doing this volume of food preparation. Part of me wanted to say ‘can you just do your job?’ But I dug down and said how I appreciated something about her work and she was so genuinely touched, I was impacted as well,



learning empathy on the job.”

Kelly Myers

From Anndee Hochman: When Kelly joined the team, she brought a quiet competence to the kitchen. She'd cooked in Portland restaurants and wasn't daunted by the amounts of food we managed at Flight—recipes that began, “chop a dozen onions and peel 20 cloves of garlic”—the tight timelines for meals or the endless hours on her feet. She didn't complain; she was deft, reliable and incredibly hard-working. It wasn't until later that we also learned of her dry, wry sense of humor and even a goofiness that bubbled up once she was comfortable in a new crowd. I'll never forget an antic, hilarious performance piece—I can't recall who wrote it—enacted in the kitchen by Elaine, Char and Kelly. The three of them, and all of us who were listening, laughed so hard we lost our breath.



From Char Breshgold: I was assistant cook to Kelly my first year at Flight. We had a lot of friends and former co-workers in common but had never met. She was a sophisticated cook and worked

at an Italian restaurant heavily influenced by Marcella Hazan and traditional Northern Italian cuisine. I remember her telling Ruth she needed to burn the recipe for tomato sauce that had previously been used for the pizzas. It had cinnamon in it and Kelly was horrified. The next summer Kelly came to Flight as a writer. She was nervous when we chatted on the first evening. I don't remember the content of what she read at the end of the week in the participants sharing of their work, but I remember the writing seemed as effortless as the food she cooked.



From Cathy Brown: There aren't that many people who have a natural elegance, but I think Kelly is one of them. In my memories of her at Flight she had both vitality and restraint, and she could lead with either asset. Two things immediately come to mind. She was such an avid reader—when we had a break in the afternoon Kelly would always be up by the pool in a lounge chair with her wayfarers on, looking cool and alert but also deep into her book. She was a phenomenal chef—I remember a moment when she

gave me a spoonful of a sauce she was working on at the stove. I turned my head sharply to look at her when I sampled it. It wasn't just tasty, it was exquisite. How she made those flavors happen, in quantity and with our limited ingredients, really startled me.

Rebecca Gundle



“I had been working at Flight of the Mind since eighth grade. During my fifth summer, I agreed to be the personal driver for Lucille Clifton, who wasn't up to walking back and forth from the Cedarwood cabins, across the river. I would pick up Lucille in the morning for her class and take her back after lunch so she could rest. Before dinner I'd pick her up again and later, after the evening program, drive her home. I'm not sure how Lucille felt about me—Ruth's eighteen-year-old freckle-faced niece. At first she was cordial if a bit distant and I was nervous, trying to make small talk.



“After the first couple of days, Lucille confessed she was deeply missing music; this was before smart phones, the cabins didn't have radios or TV, and the quietness of women putting pen to paper was a little too quiet for Lucille. From that point on, she and I listened to music in the car: Ruth's red Corolla produced a cassette of Motown hits that became our sound track. As the week went on, we sang along to “My Girl” and “Mr. Postman,” dancing in our seats. The last few nights, heading back to her cabin, she begged me to keep driving so we could listen to a few more songs. We continued on towards McKenzie Pass, singing and dancing as dusk turned the sky lavender. Several years later, when Lucille gave a reading in Portland for Literary Arts Ruth and Judith brought

me with them to a small reception for her. I wasn't sure if she'd remember me but when she saw me her face lit up. ‘There's my dancing partner!’ she said, and leaned in for a hug.”

Madeline ffitich

“I was fourteen the first time I went to Flight of the Mind as part of the kitchen crew. It was my first job and it was so much more than a job. I remember the freshness of early mornings as my best friend Rebecca and I started work, running endless loads of dishes, the impossibility of not being soaked by the end of a shift. I was exhausted at the end of

Flight was a radical project, where the cooking and serving of food, cleaning and making beds was known and seen, loved, included and respected. This was understood as fundamental to feminism. —Madeline ffitich

each long day and I began to understand how strong I was. I remember being handed lists of ingredients and told to use common sense when it came to measurements and amounts (a lesson that I still rely on). I remember peeling garlic forever. I remember joyful lunches full of gratitude for the good food and companionship, laughing, we tired women from the kitchen reclining in the grass to delight in the feast we'd cooked, served, and cleaned up after. I remember reading the poems participants had



pinned to the outside of their doors as I went down the hall emptying wastebaskets. Writing was everywhere. It began to seem like something I could do. I remember overhearing literary gossip at the prep table. I didn't understand most of it, but I'd never been so deliciously riveted. I remember vivid lessons in feminism, in race, power, class, politics, women's history, sexuality, language. Everything was discussed in that kitchen. Rebecca and I were by far the youngest women there. We were not pandered to. We were allowed to overhear, to ask questions. We were expected to listen

and to participate. I was sometimes affirmed, but I was also challenged. One afternoon Anndee challenged us to bring our own writing to share on one of those lunch breaks, my first time doing such a thing. I've never really stopped."

Cathy Brown

"I loved working both of the week-long workshops back-to-back as it meant I could experience two different worlds coming into being—three, really, because the staff experience became its own world too. We shared our personal stories with one another and talked through difficulties. Every staff transition took work, and one year we had to really grapple with how it felt for new staff to

I stood with Ruth in a circle of women at dusk close to the river and she led us in light stretching, blowing raspberries, making an assortment of guttural noises, and generally loosening up. Was I there as a writer? Was I about to read from my work in front of an audience like the others? Nope. But I was there, invited by her into a space of performative group energy, real writer's lives, and the profound strength of people crossing thresholds. It is a moment that has resonated throughout my life.

—Cathy Brown



come in the second week when we had already bonded as a group; we continually created ourselves as a team.

When, between weeks, we sat at the big kitchen table during relaxed staff suppers, Ruth and Judith regaled us with tales from the early years. Hilarious descriptions designed to make us laugh, but also to share, like everything at Flight, a link to our history as makers of worlds."

JUDITH

Many words were written in appreciation of the staff and their meals, often tacked to the kitchen doors.

Workshop
 At the workshop even the cooking staff are writers holding kitchen readings at ten and two, hearing poems punctuated by the soft tink tink of spoon against metal mixing bowl. The women here are learning to claim space, at first keeping out on the chairs on the deck, later stretching out on the spiral staircase, around the curve of the spiral staircase, in any space

Lunch
 In 1990, the first year I went to The Flight of the Mind, an annual workshop for women writers held near McKenzie Bridge, I had an epiphany at lunch on Wednesday. Standing in the buffet line, I caught sight of a gigantic silver bowl brimming with salad greens and reds and purples—forest green leaf lettuce, red pepper strips, and purple white bowls of radishes, onions, mushrooms, them stood three tall jars of

Kitchen Magic
 In the kitchen magic ferments like yeast.
 It is in the ritual of mothers teaching laughter
 The lesson of their lives.
 It is the alchemy of women laughing
 while chopping hearts
 Our power sisters
 of dough.

Artists in the Kitchen
Why have you invited the eater here?
 —after Evelyn C. White

What story does the food tell?
 The craft, clear in the juxtaposition of romaine lettuce green bell pepper red baby carrot orange, mingling of crisp sponge of mushroom snap of squash soft yielding of raisin cool crunch of cucumber tangy tomatillo sweet tomato cheddar

Kitchen doggerel,
 Lasagne's past, and cabbage s and Anndee's braided challah, they served the cobbler first I thought that was tomorrow . By my count chicken should be Bar-B-Qued legs and thighs Tofu for the tree-huggers, (the above section was written
 What's this before my eyes?
 Ah, yes, I'm right
 it is tonight,

DAY THE LAST:
 WELL, THIS IS IT
 YET YOU INSIST
 BEFORE YOU'LL
 COME ON, YOU GUY
 YOU GET TO ST
 INTERACT WIT
 TO STRETCH TH
 WHILE I GO HO
 EXCITEMENT 26
 FOR SAILBOATE
 FOR RICH FOLK

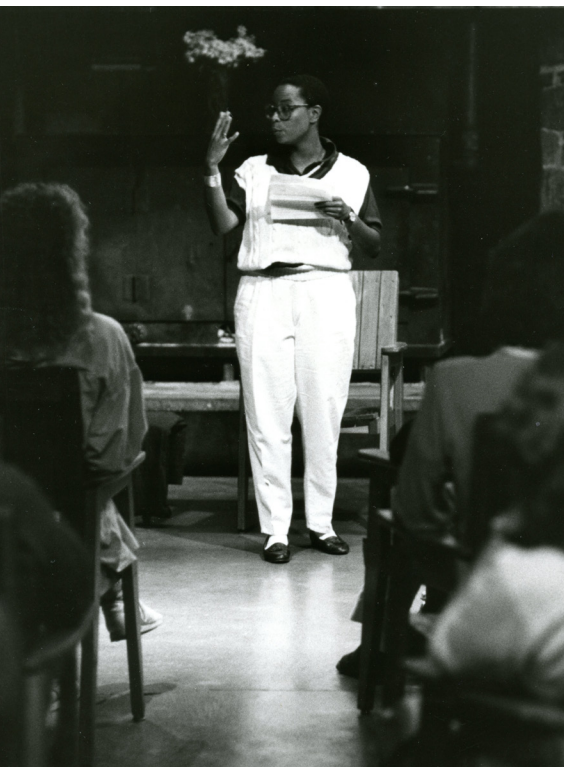


11 • *The Evening Readings*

RUTH

Most writing workshops during that era shone a spotlight on the work of the most famous teachers, with casual and sparsely attended open mic readings for students, often late at night or at times when people wanted to be doing something else. At Flight, the evening program for nights two, three and four were readings by the teachers, with questions and discussion afterwards. The last three nights were devoted to readings by participants of

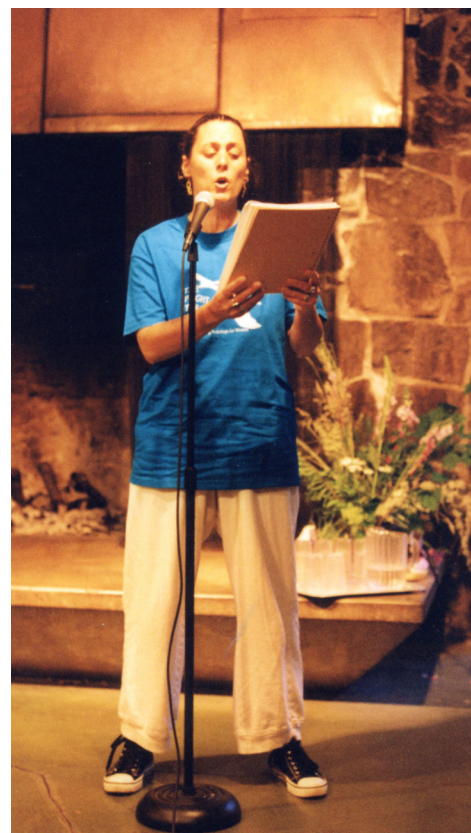
work written during the workshop. These readings were, for many, the highlight of the week. It was rare that anyone missed one.



We brought down our own professional sound system which Judith ran. The chairs would be arranged theatre style in front of the huge fireplace, which often, even in summer, as evenings could be chilly, crackled and blazed. The lights would be dimmed, with spotlights on the reader; the doors to the terrace closed to soften the sound of the river, the mike turned on, the tape set to record....and the room would fall silent.

For the teachers' readings, Judith, Anndee or I would do an introduction—not the perfunctory kind, but a lengthy, carefully written one, that included a story relevant to that moment. And then the reader would step forward to applause and begin.

The teachers, in that setting, often felt freer than usual to share deeply-felt work, while the audience relaxed into words that evoked honest tears or howls of laughter. Readings were sometimes unexpectedly spiced by a song from Naomi Shihab Nye or Janice Gould, or by a





performance by Carletta Wilson and Theresa Clark. Mimi Khalvati often introduced her group to the ghazal—a Persian poetic form with a repeating phrase in which traditionally, the audience joins the poet. These poems would find a place in an evening reading, and the whole community would recite the phrase with gusto.

The three evenings that showcased participants' work written that week, each came with an intensive class in giving a public ensemble reading. To participate one had to attend a meeting over the lunch hour on the day of the reading.



Using the combined brains and intuition of all the readers, and each woman's capsule description of her piece, I guided the group in deciding on an order that had the right rhythm and variety, started with something easy to engage with, and ended with something upbeat or powerful. We made sure that no one's work was at odds with what came before or after it.

Each writer introduced the reader who followed her—a simple “our next reader is...” having practiced how to pronounce the name—which not incidentally required that she remain standing and accept her applause genuinely, before she could make the introduction.



Participating in the readings was optional, but practicing aloud and adhering to the time limits was not. Readers took seriously the obligation to practice their reading, often finding a partner to practice with and get helpful feedback from (am I too quiet? am I reading too quickly? am I giving enough pauses at moments that need them?)

I—and in later years, Anndee—helped those who asked, to pare down their pieces to fit the three minutes for poetry and six for prose. Writers grew to

have an unexpected fondness for that editing process, commonly referred to as “being Ruthed.” For some, it was their first time working closely with an editor—another part of the Flight learning experience.



We wanted the last reader to have every bit as much of the audience’s attention as the first one, so we kept the readings to a little over an hour; it fell to Judith, as the one in charge of the sound system (and in later years the recording set-up) to subtly let the reader know if she was coming close to the end of her allotted time.



JUDITH

The staff, always on top of every detail, would place a tray of twelve glasses and a pitcher of water on the hearth for the readers.

After dinner, when I had walked each reader through a practice session at the microphone, Ruth led the group into the shower room, which had a nice open space and fabulous acoustics (or outside, if the shower room was in use.) There, they indulged in



serious and silly movements and sounds to loosen up their vocal cords, let out nervous energy, and get psyched for what would be, for some, their first public reading.

Then she took them, the women, to the bath. She reminded them to speak the mother tongue. She practiced, Ruth, the publisher-angel coordinator, wolf-mother, all the sounds the animals taught her. Then she led the women. Then the women led. Then Ruth said “Wait. Let’s all make the same sound at the same time.” Patient was she, and so they followed. Then they had a dandy evening.

—From an evaluation

Even those who were experienced at giving readings appreciated the careful preparation. Many who contributed recollections for this history still remember Ruth looking around the circle, just before they went into the lodge to take their seats, making eye contact with each one and saying, “Take a moment before you start to feel your feet on the ground, take a breath and begin on the exhale (it will give you a strong beginning and carry you), and know that someone in the audience needs to hear what you are about to read.”

The readings were interesting, alive, provocative, witty, and lyrical. Some of them took your breath away.

The readings, as well as class sessions, sometimes reflected difficult issues that were beginning to be explored in the wider world. Some participants tackled grim stories of childhood abuse, racism or homophobia. Long before the notion of “trigger warnings” had come into play, we considered carefully how to balance the writer’s truth with its possible effect on her audience.

ANNDEE

We wanted women to feel supported in their efforts to describe mental or physical illness, or sexual violence. But at the same time there were women who could not listen to such material when it was painfully raw, if they themselves were on wobbly legs, confronting painful truths of their own.

Eventually we added a long section about this in the participants’ packet which included several teachers’ responses to the question: How do you know when something is ready to share with an audience?

Andrea Carlisle said that for her the test was: Am I asking something for *myself*—for the listeners/readers to feel sorry for me, for them to like me, for them to feel as shitty as I do—or is the work its own thing, asking nothing but to be heard and felt? Evelyn White said that she asks herself, Why am I inviting *these* people to hear *this* piece?

Ursula Le Guin said that she makes a distinction for herself between “wallowing,” which she would feel free to write but not to share publicly, and “bearing witness.” Elizabeth Woody said she





believes that “our words make the world,” and that just as we have a responsibility to contribute materially to our community so we have a responsibility to contribute words that will heal, empower, embolden others—which doesn’t mean that we can’t deal with the harshest aspects of our lives.

RUTH

After the readings there was a palpable euphoria in the room, the readers, pumped from reading their work and receiving their



applause, individually and as a group at the end. The audience, too, was jazzed and moved and wanting to hug the readers to tell them what they loved about their readings.

At the ten o’clock “quiet hour” many would end up in the dining room carrying on quietly while munching on snacks, too full of the evening’s energy to go to their rooms to write or sleep.

What We Are Given

*Dear Patricia,
This place is heaven, Grace Paley is God,
the other women are geniuses, I'm writing
the Bible. Wish you were here.*

For a person who doesn't cry
I've been crying all week,
for an empty doorway, for the sound of a river,
for somebody's brother, for a single word,
for so much rain. It started
Tuesday night, the whole broken world
was at that reading. My heart opened like a
clogged drain. I could suddenly feel.

Afterwards, Jenny and I had to go outside,
smoke cigarettes and say "fuck" a lot,
the way you do after sex, to come down.
To diffuse the white light shining with curls of smoke.
Out of the corner of your eye,
one curl becomes a small gray cat.
It might be your birthday.
You kneel to her, reach out your arms.

Marion Winik





12 • *The Flight of the Mind Bookstore*

RUTH

We offered for sale books by the teachers, participants, and staff, and books about writing recommended by the teachers. Book sales were a major source of income for the scholarship fund, and we sold a *lot* every year. Ordering, schlepping them to and from St. Benedict's, setting them up every evening, returning the unsold books to Ingram for credit after the workshop was over—it was a ridiculous amount of work, but we felt it was important to have the books there.



At some point we started selling T-shirts, then sweatshirts for those who didn't believe us when we said to bring warm clothing to the foothills of the Cascades in the middle of summer. Finally, mugs, because writers absent-mindedly left the ones from the kitchen in their rooms, and we would run out.

One year Ursula had the idea that we should do a chapbook of work by writers who had taught at Flight, to sell at the workshop, with sales going to the scholarship fund. The scholarship program was very important to all of us and operated a little differently than at other writing workshops.

One afternoon, I was roaming the book table and picked up an anthology of prose poems, *The Party Train*. Probably because I love to eat, I was drawn to a poem titled "Appetite." It delighted me and I started to read it aloud to others, not knowing Alison Seevak, who wrote it, was among them. Needless to say, this pleased her and she made herself known to me. We have been close friends ever since, visiting each other in Oregon and California.

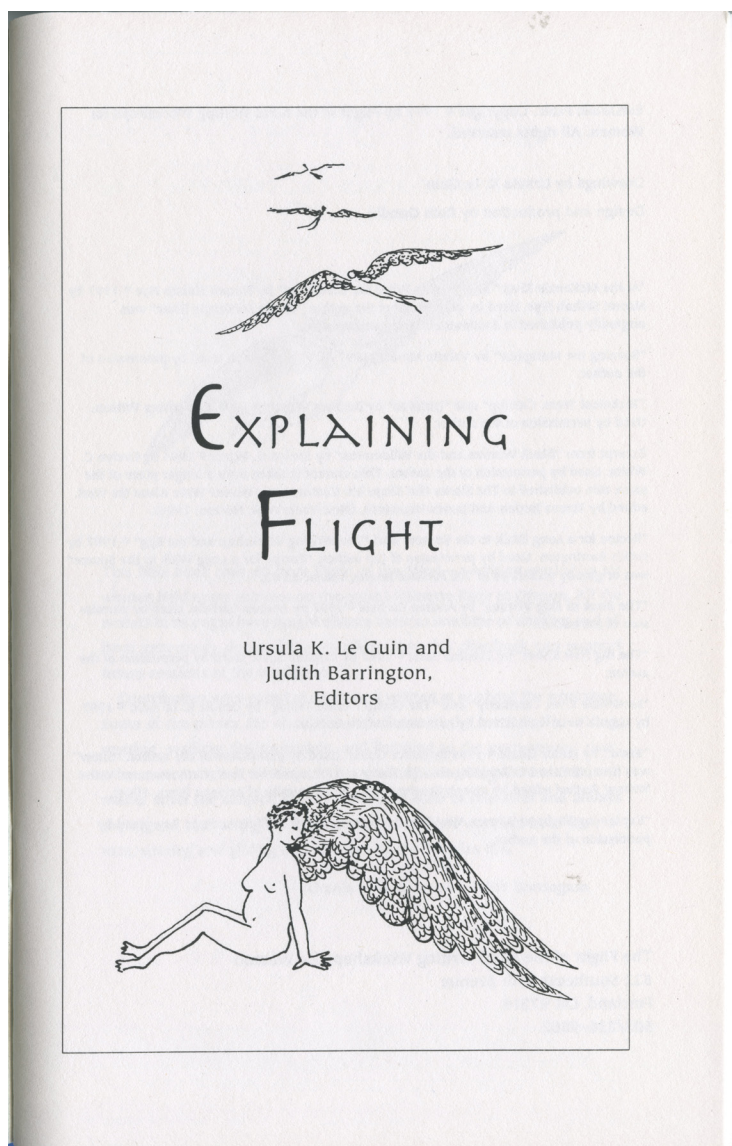
—Sandy Polishuk



We not only advertised and accepted applications for financial assistance, but we asked friends, former participants and teachers to be on the lookout for serious writers who were so without means that they would not have considered applying for a scholarship (if, indeed, they even knew about Flight).

A friend who was a juvenile court judge, Katherine English, alerted us to a writer who had kicked her addictions and was trying to get her kids back. Former participants knew of women who lived on disability, or worked minimum wage jobs, or who were drowning in medical bills. These were full scholarships and often included additional funds for transportation, childcare, or missed work.

And so we agreed with Ursula and together we created *Explaining Flight*, which was a big success. She and Judith solicited and compiled the work; Ursula did the line drawings; I designed and produced it.



EXPLAINING FLIGHT. Copyright © 1997 by Flight of the Mind Writing Workshops for Women. All rights reserved.

Drawings by Ursula K. Le Guin

Design and production by Ruth Gundle

"At the McKenzie River" and "Hiding What We Love Most" by Naomi Shihab Nye © 1997 by Naomi Shihab Nye. Used by permission of the author. "At the McKenzie River" was originally published in *Southwestern American Literature*.

"Burning the Metaphor" by Valerie Miner © 1997 by Valerie Miner. Used by permission of the author.

"Technical Term: Calving" and "Untitled" by Barbara Wilson © 1997 by Barbara Wilson. Used by permission of the author.

Excerpt from "Black Women and the Wilderness" by Evelyn C. White © 1994 by Evelyn C. White. Used by permission of the author. This excerpt is taken from a longer piece of the same title published in *The Stories that Shape Us: Contemporary Women Write About the West*, edited by Teresa Jordan and James Hepworth, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).

"Recipe for a Long Walk to the Source" and "The Writing Workshop and the Egg" © 1997 by Judith Barrington. Used by permission of the author. "Recipe for a Long Walk to the Source" was originally published in *The Portland Review*, Volume 37 #2.

"The Book of Dog Virtues" by Andrea Carlisle © 1997 by Andrea Carlisle. Used by permission of the author.

"The Big Hair Room" by Cristina Salat © 1997 by Cristina Salat. Used by permission of the author.

"McKenzie River Ceremony" and "The Group Picture Taking" by Ursula K. Le Guin © 1997 by Ursula K. Le Guin. Used by permission of the author.

"Snow" by Janice Gould © 1994 by Janice Gould. Used by permission of the author. "Snow" was first published in *Returning the Gift: Poetry and Prose from the First North American Native Writers' Festival* edited by Joseph Bruchac (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994).

"Explaining Flight to Women We Love" by Lucinda Roy © 1997 by Lucinda Roy. Used by permission of the author.

The Flight of the Mind Writing Workshops for Women
622 Southeast 29th Avenue
Portland, OR 97214
503/236-9862



This little book took off from Flight of the Mind—a writing workshop for women held every summer on the great McKenzie River in Oregon. All the writers in its pages have taught classes there at one time or another and all have generously donated their work so that this chapbook can support future sessions of the workshop.

Contributors were asked to send work written at or about the workshop. Some of the pieces are about the experience of the event itself: writing, revising, walking the backroads, and listening to the ever-present river; others were worked on there, but are about something different. But no matter what the subject, there's always an echo of that river and always the urge to soar and glide like the osprey we have watched from the terrace, soaring and gliding over the tops of the Douglas firs.

Ursula K. Le Guin and Judith Barrington



13 • *It Was Just Us*



JUDITH

It was a little like being on a sea voyage together, throwing our lot in with one another and forgetting the outside world.

ANNDEE

Even the last year of Flight, in 2000, cell phones were rare and, in any event, there was no cell coverage at St. Benedict's. We relied on one telephone line for all ninety of us, as well as for Brother Daniel who ran the place. It rang in the kitchen and simultaneously in an adorable little phone booth in the lodge; you can see a writer waiting for it just to the left of Judith and Grace in the photo below.

When calls came in, the kitchen staff would have to run around trying to find the woman wanted. To make a call, you had three minutes. Strange to think of now when we are all accessible at all hours. In many ways it was not convenient, of course, but it served us well—effectively separating us from the lives we left behind. We could be contacted if necessary, but unless it was urgent, we were out of reach.

RUTH

For communicating amongst ourselves we used old fashioned methods: A staff member rang the bell for meals, right at 8 a.m., noon and 6 p.m.; writers put their names on the doors of their rooms and one could leave a note taped there—we kept a master plan in case someone was needed in a hurry; a large bulletin board was placed where it was easily viewed entering the dining room. It was the main way writers could put out an urgent need for an adapter plug or tampons, set up discussions over lunch, or organizing an ad hoc peer critique group.



How about a BIRDER'S
Watch? What birds you've
seen - where + when

Monday
2 dippers
7:30am on the rocks
below the deck

1 Female Harlequin 7:00-8am same
Duck
1 Flicker No - Actually Amazing
also 1 Flicker - really

Red Breasted Sapsucker
Townsend's Warbler
Towhee
same

spotted sandpiper
Female Rufous Hummingbird
Mallards - 2

Hummingbird @ 9:30 am outside cabin 9
(don't know what kind)

Woodpecker
Raptor - Bald Eagle??!

BIRD POEM

tree swallows (by C beds)
That osprey (from the deck -
across the river) 2 ospreys -
mated pair

sapsucker (I think) foraging
on the water tower

bats?! I think, one evening
on a walk from 126
to St. Benedict's
(I know, I know, but
it's still a trip -)

steller jumps in the Doug firs on
the deck

winter wrens (Jenni Harris
wings side to
violet green swallow (near
cabins / lodge on
road)

bank swallows
water ouzels (dippers)
Swainson Thrush (singing)

Sex (in writing)

Discussion group
meet 2:00 pm
Dining Room

Tuesday Trudy

Stephanie Hoppe Tee C

Anyone interested in a discussion
about how we define ourselves AS writers,
what it feels like to do that, doubting
whether we are writers, etc., etc.
Please meet 1:00 pm on the deck

FRIDAY

JAN Beatty

Does anyone have a buzz cutter
suitable for shaving someone's head?
IF so, my room no. is B15 or
find me in the kitchen.

thanks,

Madeleine
(dishwasher)

Self-Publishing in limited editions
(like 10 copies) using xerox machines.
- How to get a "finished" look.

Saturday - at lunch - on patio

POETRY GRRLS

- PUT POEMS ON THE WALLS
- PUT POEMS ON YOUR DOORS
- PUT POEMS ON THE CEILING
- PUT POEMS ON THE FLOORS

WE WANT TO READ YOU

Walking partners
 wanted - vigorous
 (fairly).
 Judith Wild
 (memoir)

See
Cleaner
Bunk
Room

COME HELP WELCOME SHABBAT

by
blessing the challah

5:45 p.m. Friday
in the dining room

all are welcome



I WOULD LIKE TO READ MY PLAY
 (especially for your response and comments)
 TO ANYONE INTERESTED IN LISTENING
 THE PLAY IS SET IN THIS WORKSHOP,
 IT IS BI LINGUAL, HOWEVER, NOT SO
 MUCH THAT IT CAN'T BE UNDERSTOOD, IT
 DEALS WITH ISSUES OF RACISM,
 INTERNALIZED RACISM, INCEST,
 "SPIRITUALITY" AND USES HUMOR
 THROUGHOUT - I'LL READ IT FRIDAY AT
 2pm - I'LL BE IN LUNCH - GRACIAS
 AREA Juanita

For
 anyone who wants to hear
 about the International
 Feminist Book Fair in Oslo,
 Norway this June, I'd be
 glad to talk about it -
 Wednesday over lunch
 on the terrace - Ruth

SING-ALONG

5:00 - 6:00

front of the lodge

Passionate Political Poem
 by a New Mexican
 Attending a Feminist Workshop
 in Oregon

In the parking lot,
 Not a single
 Pickup truck.

- Betsy James



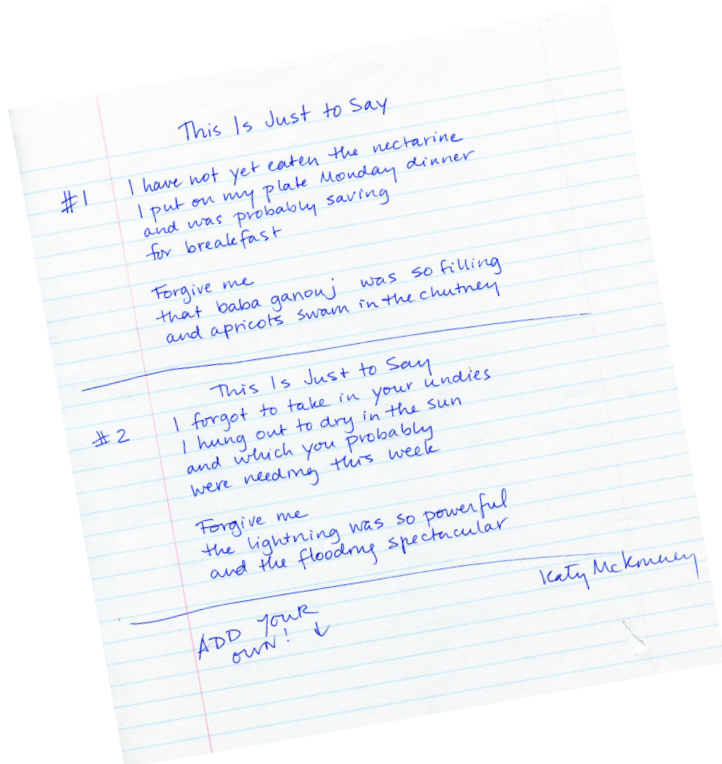


I typically made announcements each evening before the reading: reminders about what was happening the next day, exhortations not to hoard cups in rooms, and updates on trending topics of interest (how long did it take to walk up to Tamolitch Pool? Which tree is the osprey fishing from in the early morning?). When Anndee took over making the announcements, they became something of a performance piece—a highlight.

We came prepared for self-sufficiency, including a well-stocked first aid box; usually among the writers was a doctor or a nurse who would help treat minor problems or decide if a trip to Eugene was necessary. There was a lot of sharing—everything from shampoo to sunscreen to pens and notebooks were passed around. When the little store at McKenzie Bridge ran out of tampons and pads, Anndee set up a box in the lodge for donations.

Dorm life, usually quiet in order not to disturb writers or nappers, would often turn to silliness as pajama-clad women took

turns with teeth brushing and night-time prep in the bathrooms at the ends of each hallway, before everyone retired to her own room to write or read or sleep.



14 • *Who Could Write All Day Here?*

JUDITH

St. Benedict's had an old but very inviting swimming pool. At first, assuming it was swimsuit-optional, we created a kind of water nymphs' paradise and like to remember Muggs Regan, in her seventies, stark naked, diving gracefully from the high board. Younger ones, breasts bouncing, took up her challenge. Later, sadly, swimsuits had to be added to the list of "what to bring," and the high diving board was removed, but the pool continued to beckon on hot afternoons.



ANNDEE

You could hike along the McKenzie River Trail to the spectacular Koosah Falls and Sahalie Falls. One of the most popular hikes follows the river through an old growth forest and across a lava field to Tamolitch Pool. Viewed from a high point on the trail it is impossibly turquoise. Or you could head across meadows of wildflowers into the forest, catching glimpses of the Three Sisters mountain range.



Once, a group of us hiked along the McKenzie to Tamolitch Pool, bluer than blue in the woods, unexpected, and as cold as anything other than ice, almost molten, so cold it burned. Liquid ice. We entered and floated ourselves in as if in a rite of purification. Goddesses we became there in that blue green emerald water. —Pamela Powell



I had everything I wanted here: community, an atmosphere of support (but non-intrusive), a sense of being cared for, provided for, made most graphic in abundant and excellent food. But also a rare experience of not having to deal with small things as they came up. (Praise be to Ruth!) I loved my daily head-clearing hike along the river or to a waterfall, the pine-scented air and crunch beneath my feet. And I got exactly what I wanted...a clear vision of my work, and a deeper confidence in myself as a writer.

—Carol Seajay



RUTH

Evelyn White wanted to join the groups who went rafting down the McKenzie but was afraid to go. When she grew up in Gary, Indiana in the 50s, African Americans were excluded from public swimming pools so she didn't learn to swim. Also, as a Black city girl, she saw the rural outdoors as a place of danger. The summer she mustered her courage Judith and I said we'd go with her.

Midway along, our raft hit a tricky rapid at the wrong angle, and threw Mona Oikawa into the very cold and



fast-moving river. Mona did as we'd been instructed, while we shouted and reassured her. I famously stood up and started crying, shouting "feet first, Mona, feet first" as the raft quickly left Mona behind. Our guide grabbed a tree branch, and the women in the stern grabbed her as she was carried downstream.

Mona was a little bruised, shivering cold, and more than a little shook up, but chipper. That evening as everyone gathered in the lodge, the group wanted to hear what happened. Mona stood up and told her story and then

added that she'd been writing about her mother, who had recently died. Oikawa, she told us, meant "river" in Japanese. Being thrown into the McKenzie would find its way into her story.

Evelyn was calm throughout. We'd had a calamity and we'd all survived it. Her much anthologized essay, "Black Women in the Wilderness" in which she describes confronting her deeply ingrained fears of the rural outdoors, includes a description of this, her first raft trip. She went on, later, to raft the Grand Canyon.



ANNDEE

There were hot springs nearby, one in the river and one that came up in a swimming pool where you paid a small fee and they gave you towels.



Marjorie Sandor always came prepared for serious fly fishing. Judith, when she could find the time, would join her. One week, Carol Brunoe, a member of the Warm Springs Tribe, caught a fish with her bare hands.



JUDITH

When Grace Paley became a regular teacher, the ping-pong table in the lodge assumed greater importance: not only was Grace a night owl, often staying up



long past the rest of us, but she was also a whizz at ping-pong. I lost many a close-fought match while others were queuing up for the next chance to beat her. Few were successful.



RUTH

Grace was pretty swift at pool too. As were many others.



ANNDEE

Sometimes a nap was all you wanted.



RUTH

Or just to sit and watch—or listen to—the river go by.



15 • The Rest of the Year

JUDITH

Flight of the Mind happened for only a short time each summer, but as soon as one ended, Ruth and I started working on the next year's. We booked St. Benedict and Cedarwood Lodge before we left McKenzie Bridge. By the end of September, we had decided on the following year's teachers and had prepared, mailed and received most of the signed contracts.

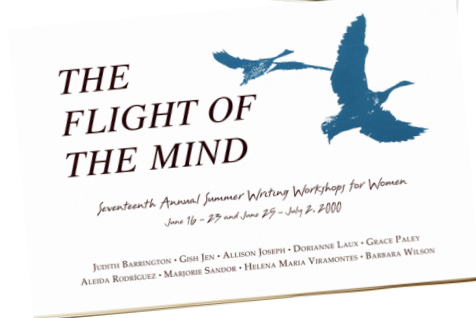
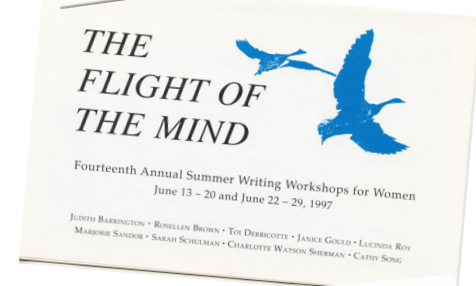
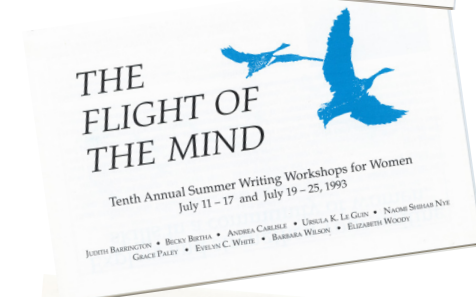
In the fall there was the brochure to design, have commercially printed, and mail to several thousand women. At a day-long mailing party, women would drop in for an hour or two, catch up with whoever was sitting around our dining room table sticking labels on, sorting by zip code, etc., eat some cookies and then make way for those who had just arrived. It was a lively gathering; we always had more volunteers than we needed so there was plenty of time for visiting.

The dreaded task followed a few days later: double-checking the piles and putting them into bulk mail trays according to pages-long requirements, and schlepping them down to Bulk Mail Hell at the main Post Office, where every year some rule would have been changed requiring hours of repackaging and re-stickering. Claire Smith was our Bulk Mail Angel. Nothing daunted her, even if it took many hours to re-do them.



RUTH

In the winter we booked the teachers' plane tickets, hired the staff and fielded participant inquiries. Our busy personal and work lives had to be fitted around Flight's time-sensitive tasks. We took a yearly trip to England to see Judith's family and friends (and

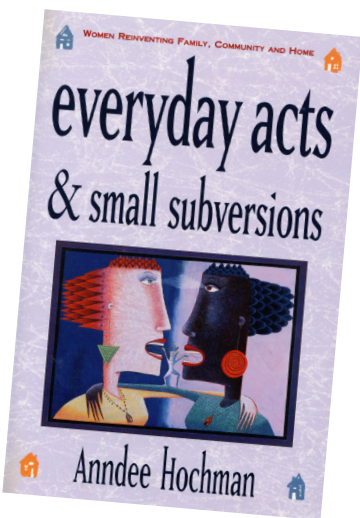
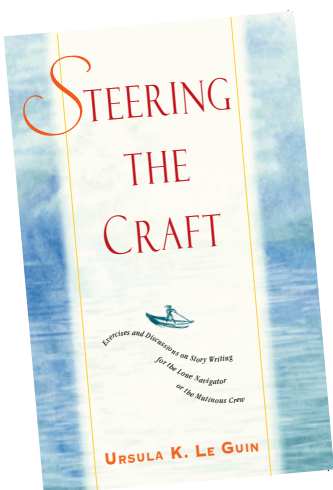




because she just needed to be there to breathe that air and walk and drive in that landscape). During the years of Flight, we went in the fall, the quiet time of year for Flight duties. It wasn't until we were no longer doing Flight that we could go in the springtime, when the Sussex woods are carpeted with bluebells. Judith also taught workshops there (for Arvon, for the London Poetry School, among others) and gave readings (the Brighton Poetry Festival, the Southbank Poetry Series, the London Poetry Café, and at various universities). In combination with our trip to England we went often to Spain, France, or Italy. I

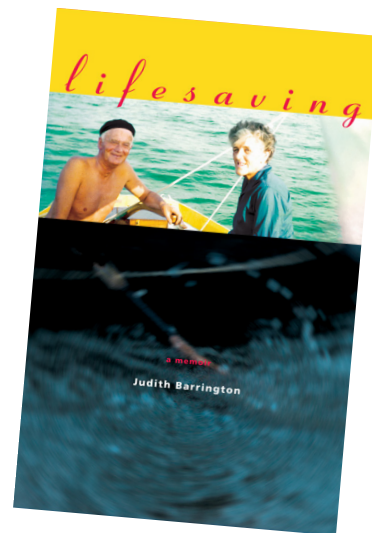
went to Frankfurt for the Book Fair, and to Oslo and Montreal for International Feminist Bookfairs.

In the 90s we started going to Mexico in the winter, just for a vacation. Then, for a few years, we put on "Flight of the Mind Mexico," first in Puerto Vallarta and then at Mar de Jade, an idyllic retreat center a few hours north of P.V. on the coast, outside the tiny village of Chacala. These workshops were taught by Judith and were quite different from Flight with their own special charm. A separate PDF will be available with photos from those workshops.

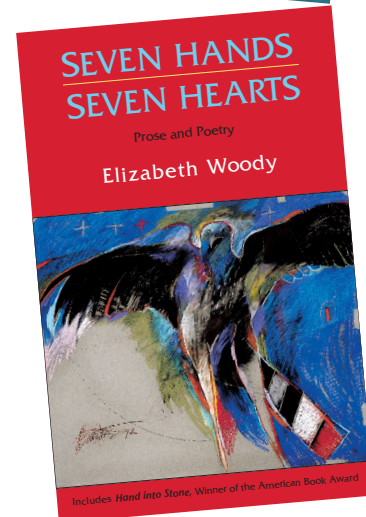


In the fall after the first Flight in 1984, I started The Eighth Mountain Press, part of the "Women in Print Movement." The first book was Judith's *Trying to Be An Honest Woman*, for which we created a book tour. We traveled around the country by train in our own private quarters courtesy of Amtrak, in exchange for a series of op-eds Judith wrote to stop Congress from cutting its subsidy. Judith did readings at universities and feminist bookstores in Boise, Denver, Chicago, Iowa City, Minneapolis, New York City, Boston, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Lawrence, Kansas City, Albuquerque, Tucson, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara. It was the heyday of feminist bookstores and feminist events generally. Poetry readings were especially popular; audiences were huge. I remember that over a hundred women came to the reading in Iowa City; the bookstores and college auditoriums were packed.

Among the books I published during the years of Flight, were many by Flight teachers and staff: *Cows and Horses* by Barbara Wilson; *Seven Hands, Seven Hearts* by Elizabeth Woody; *Everyday Acts and Small Subversions* by Anndee Hochman; *A Journey of One's Own* by Thalia Zepatos, as well as *History and Geography* and *Lifesaving: a Memoir* by Judith. Two books came out of the workshop itself: *Steering the Craft* by Ursula K. Le Guin and *Writing the Memoir* by Judith Barrington. *The Riverhouse Stories* by Andrea Carlisle became an Eighth Mountain title after originally being published by Calyx, and *Words Under the Words* by Naomi Shihab Nye was distributed by Eighth Mountain after the demise of Breitenbush Books.

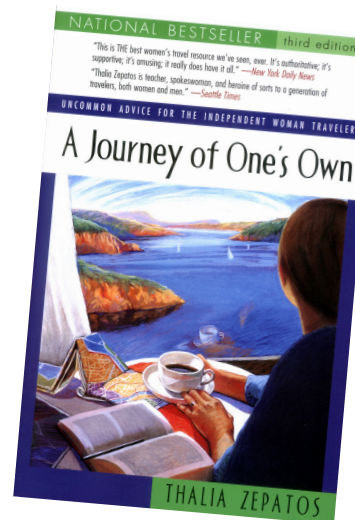


The press required a lot of flying around. With Consortium as my distributor, I traveled twice a year to New York for sales conference meetings to present the new titles to the sales reps. Then there was the annual American Booksellers Convention where new titles were presented to booksellers and rights sales took place. I often shared booths with various feminist publishers at the American Library Association and the Modern Language Association meetings. Fortunately, none of these ever overlapped with Flight. In the winters, for the first decade of Flight, I taught Women and the Law at Lewis and Clark Law School.



JUDITH

In 1990 Ruth and I instigated and then were among the founders of Soapstone, a non-profit that built and ultimately ran a writing retreat program for two women at a time on twenty-two acres of forest and a salmon-spawning stream in Oregon's Coast Range. I started out being the director, then Ruth took it on until 2010. Soapstone called for entirely new skills, especially fundraising—we raised close to a million dollars—and much learning about the natural world and rural living. Ruth has said that of all the challenging things she's done (which include writing legal briefs and arguing landmark cases before the Oregon Supreme Court) our becoming Soapstone's primary fundraisers was the most arduous (and least enjoyable).



In addition to Flight of the Mind, I taught creative writing at other summer writing programs like Haystack in Cannon Beach, Centrum in Port Townsend, Fishtrap at Wallowa Lake, Hassayampa in Prescott, Gemini Ink in San Antonio, the Ashland Writing Conference, Split Rock in Duluth (part of the University of Minnesota's Creative Writing Program). As often as I could, I took advantage of writing retreat programs for some uninterrupted time for my own writing. And I regularly traveled around the Northwest—and sometimes further afield—to give readings. For many years I wrote op-ed pieces for The Oregonian and syndicated them to newspapers around the country.

We were all over the place in those years! But we'd always be back at home to attend to Flight's tasks. In April, we organized the applications into preferred classes and sent them to teachers for selection, and wrote and printed the information booklet that would be part of each participant's welcome folder. We notified the lucky ones, who got a fat packet in the mail, and the unlucky ones, who got a kind letter explaining the many factors that went into putting a class together. We allocated scholarships, ordered books, T-shirts, sweatshirts and mugs, all while doing masses of banking, bookkeeping and data entry.

By early June it was Flight all the time. We chartered the Greyhound-type bus which would pick up those arriving by plane or train in Eugene and return them at the end of the week. We bought supplies: name tags, aprons, bedspreads for the couches, flats of annuals for the flower boxes, rolls and rolls of paper table covering for the dining room, napkins, glasses and dishes to supplement what St. Benedict supplied. I loved to make the slips of paper for the lottery that writers could enter if they wanted a room over the lodge that faced the river (some loved those rooms; some found the river "too loud").



Produce and meat were ordered wholesale, staples bought at a restaurant supply store (we'd buy, for example, a nine-pound can of Dijon mustard and eight fifty-pound bags of flour), we reserved

the U-Haul truck, and fielded lots of questions. Some women had to drop out; those on the waiting list were added. We became more and more focused on the workshop until it was all we thought about and all we did, and we were eager for it to begin.

16 • Some Flight Traditions

RUTH

When the summer solstice fell during a week of Flight as it usually did, someone, often Ursula, Grace, or Janice, would lead us out to the meadow where we would dance, bang on drums, sing and chant, twirl with feathers and wildflowers in our hair, reveling in the long sunny day.



JUDITH

On the last afternoon we took a group photo. Sometimes we posed on the terrace, balanced on tables on tables and chairs behind the front rows; sometimes we were forced inside by the weather, but always there was much joking as the photographer—Ruth or I, sometimes Ruth’s sister Barbara,



The Group-Picture Taking

I look up behind me, they are there. (5 times - the 4th in margin)

A row of women stands on two tables, a row of women stands on the ground in front of them, a row of women sits on chairs in front of them, a row of women sits on the ground in front of them (one's the photographer rapidly) lie on the ground in front of them. (end marker)

Waiting I look up behind me, turning my head round: they are there, shining and towering above me sleek against sky, eyes quick as swallows, a shape a mercantile will by women people as cotton T-shirts and substantial feel Yosemite, beautiful, O beautiful, beautiful on the collapsing-table, terrified and laughing in the sunlight!

In winter in the low places, I will look up, behind me: you are there. (5 times)



twice Tee Corinne—would count down for the shutter click. (Group photos are included at the end.) Many poems were written about the picture taking, including Ursula’s performance piece which captures both the silliness and the joy of the undertaking and ends with the lovely refrain, *In winter, in the low places, I will look up, behind me: You are there.*

RUTH

Often the women of color would designate a day to get together over lunch on the terrace. And sometimes other affinity groups, such as Jewish women, would reserve a table and put out the word.

ANNDEE

Each Friday, Elissa and I put out an open invitation for anyone to join us in the dining room to touch one of the twelve loaves of egg-washed, sesame-seed-sprinkled, braided challah and bless the bread with the traditional Jewish prayer (transposed into feminine God-language) or with a private blessing of their own.



RUTH

We had a sneaky way of knowing if it was someone’s birthday. Everyone filled out an emergency contact form upon arrival which included her birthdate, from which we made a list of birthdays that week. Once everyone had gone through the buffet line, the staff would bring out a dessert with candles and, banging pots and pans, blow bubbles or whatever else fun was at hand, while



I will never forget the moment at Flight when ninety women stood up in the dining room and sang “Happy Birthday” to me. I had arrived scared out of my shoes. I’d stayed pretty much to myself, writing and watching the river. I remember being startled, starting to run away, then just opening up and letting it all flood in. It was “one of those moments” in one’s life. Flight made me a real writer, that was its gold to me, but this was such a high.

—Gay Monteverde



singing. Everyone would join in. Classmates wrote birthday greetings on the paper tablecloth and, after dinner, would wrap it around a bouquet of wildflowers for the birthday girl.

ANNDEE

We often invited writers to read to us in the kitchen during quiet mid-morning stretches when we were mostly chopping and stirring—in the manner of the “lectores”

in Cuban cigar factories. We often got sneak previews of the evening readings, and the writers had a chance to try out their work with a small and appreciative audience.



17 • *The Rhythm of the Week*



JUDITH

The week had a rhythm that was similar every session. There was anxiety in the air on the afternoon the women arrived. Ruth greeted them as they came into the lodge—eyes wide as they took it all in or eyes smiling as they spied an old friend—and directed them to the table where I gave out packets, name tags and directions to the dorm rooms so they could quickly settle in. The staff’s special barbecue dinner made a big dent in the nervousness and Ursula’s “pome,” which addressed it directly, elicited laughter and release.



But we never underestimated the courage it took for most to arrive in a remote place where they were completely dependent on us for their basic needs, where many knew no one else and where they hoped to write and write and write. For some it would be their first opportunity of its kind, and for most, the only week during the year they could devote solely to writing.



The first day was full of expectation, the chatty ones chattier than usual; the quiet ones quieter. As the week went on, you could feel the energy settle and then build.



The fourth day was full of tears. Sometimes tears of relief, sometimes of grief, sometimes of gratitude, often exhaustion from writing day and night. They had started to bond and to trust one another; most were

beginning to grasp the thing they were working on, to write work they were excited about, and sometimes they felt ecstatic.

Several times we introduced a soothing break, bringing Musica Femina (Kristan Aspen and Janna McAuslan: flute and guitar duo) to play for a wordless evening.



RUTH

By the fifth day they were ready to take off on a hike or to the hot springs. It was a day of letting go. It was also the beginning of realizing that there was just one more day of classes. Soon they would have to leave.

The last class, on the sixth day, was often intense. Afterwards, women mingled and took photos of one another. Some liked to get dressed up for the last evening.



It was the designated time for book signing.



Always, there was music and singing.





One year, during an unusual torrential down-pour, there was spontaneous square dancing in the lodge before dinner, with a three-woman band to provide the music. (Lower right side of photo below, Janice Gould on accordion.)



18 • *The Last Night*



RUTH

On the last night, after the participants' group reading and a break, we would all gather again this time with the teachers and staff sitting on the hearth facing the writers. One by one, each of the teachers spoke, then many from the staff; there were cheers and applause—for the teachers, for the staff, and from the teachers and staff to the writers. It was a joyful evening, so different from the careful and tentative first night. We had made the journey, all of us, together.

After Anndee gave her final announcements (have your bags packed before breakfast; the chartered bus for the airport will leave at exactly 10) Judith would give her traditional reminder to be extra careful as they returned to their lives. It might not be an easy transition.



She would tell the story of a woman stopped by the highway patrol doing ninety on her way back to Seattle. When the officer asked her, "What do you think you're doing?" she said, "I'm flying." We urged everyone to

keep in touch with one another, and if they were having a rough re-entry to reach out to a friend they'd made during the week.

JUDITH

When Naomi Shihab Nye was there she would end the evening with a song or two for the group—songs she had written. They were a tonic for all of us, especially for the writers whose week was over except for breakfast the next morning.







Flight of the Mind touched so many people in beautiful ways, largely because two things lived at its core: Generosity of spirit and attention to detail.

—Phyllis Thompson



19 • Leaving Day



JUDITH

On the last morning the chartered bus that had picked writers up at the airport and train station in Eugene returned to collect them; it turned into the driveway as the writers were finishing breakfast or packing up in their rooms. The bus driver would give dire warnings while the writers were saying goodbyes, exchanging addresses, posing for last-minute photos and wrapping up one last cinnamon roll for the trip home.

The teachers blew kisses as they were whisked away by their drivers to the airport. Participants, reluctant to peel themselves

away, called on the exhausted staff again and again for photo ops, requests for recipes, and tearful hugs. They had discovered heaven and were reluctant to leave it, but eventually the bus pulled away and everyone else was nudged towards their cars.

The staff, of course, were exhausted and still had jobs to do before we could collapse for a few sweet hours (when it was the end of the first week) or start loading the U-Haul for the drive back to Portland (if it was the end of the second week). We shared the feelings of both sadness and joy that permeated the air, but for us it was not a simple matter of packing a bag and leaving.



ANNDEE

When this leaving day was the end of our first week, it fell on a Friday and the second week began fifty-four hours later on Sunday afternoon. That period took on the name "interval," the British term for what Americans call "intermission"; it was our break between Act I and Act II. (For the first eight years the workshop was only one week long until we scored a second week at St. Benedict's.)

After we put away breakfast and prepared the kitchen for the break, we gathered for lunch. Then we all crashed—on the deck if it was a warm day, or in the lodge, with a comforting fire if it was chilly. We'd bring the couches up around the hearth and spend the day there reading, dozing, talking, limp—free for a while of any responsibilities. One year Cathy disappeared for an hour and reappeared rolling a tray of hot biscuits, butter, jam, and cups of hot chocolate for our fireside nap-in.



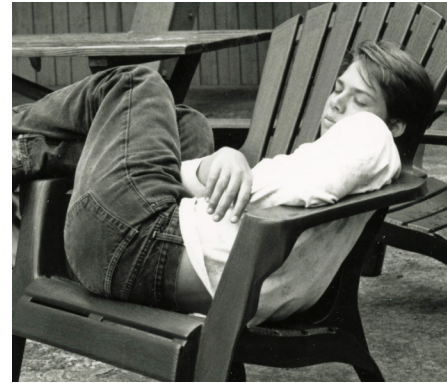
Judith always brought music to play on the sound system in the lodge: Cesária Évora, The Beatles, Aretha Franklin, some classical music, for times when music would be welcome,

It felt strange to be there, just the dozen or so of us—in the lodge, the kitchen, on the terrace, even in the shower room that had, just hours ago, thrummed with women and the energy of their writing. Now the place was spacious and quiet. Only the ever-present rush of the river as it rounded the bend in front of the terrace.

RUTH

At dinner time we'd gather around the kitchen table for leftover pizza. We'd linger, sharing stories from the week that had just ended or from years past, over a beer or two. (Alcohol was not allowed on the premises to avoid late-night dorm parties—but we always brought beer for our interval dinners.) Then off to bed for an early night.

During the later years, we hired Katharine Salzmann, a writer and massage therapist, to give each of us a massage. The massages were heavenly and Katharine herself a boon addition to our weary group, readying itself for the next session. A writer, she, too, loved being a part of Flight (she took Olga Broumas's poetry class one year). She'd arrive on the afternoon the day before the writers left and stay through the interval.



We all took hikes or went to hot springs, small groups forming depending on massage appointments and energy levels, foraging for our own breakfasts and lunches using a list the cooks had posted of what was available and where to find it. Judith often liked to walk by herself in the St. Benedict forest across the road, to clear her head, readying for a whole new set of writers the next day. The photo below shows staff members at Salilah Falls.



That night's dinner was more lively, this time a proper meal planned and brought specially for this night—something entirely different from the weeks' menus—quickly put together by a few of us, followed by a game of Scrabble, in teams.

JUDITH

One year we invited Ursula and Grace to stay with us during the interval. We all spent the requisite time alone on the leaving day, recuperating from the week, but we had dinners and evenings together. We spent much of Saturday hiking through the old growth forest and across the lava field to Tamolitch Pool, “botanizing” along the way. We lingered a long time over our picnic lunch, overlooking that other-worldly turquoise blue water. Many of the staff recollections written for this history included fond memories of those two days, especially washing dishes with Grace and Ursula after dinner. Naturally, they both insisted.

By Sunday morning after breakfast we were rested and ready to begin working off our lists to get ready for the next session. We were back on the job, and excited to see the new group of writers who would start arriving in the late afternoon.





were exceptionally creative, interesting, useful, and entertaining, including Ursula's, above.

Once back in Portland, after unloading the perishables and the staff's belongings, we'd all lie around on our front lawn, weary, sometimes to the point of zani-ness, claiming leftover produce, yogurt, brownies, veggies, pizza, peach chutney—nothing was wasted—as they were tossed from one to another.

The next day, a few of the staff would return to unload what remained in the truck, to be stored in our basement until the next summer, and then return the truck to the U-Haul store. We'd all sleep and sleep, and slowly get back to our (other) lives.



At least Judith and I did. The staff, considerably younger, would usually pick up right where they left off. In her recollections for this history, Mary Scott recalled the night she returned to Portland



after a week of hard work in the kitchen: "Late 1980s

Portland had a lot of truly great summer concerts and I headed out to one. Celebrating a lovely, collectively meaningful workshop, I danced and twirled, aware that I felt stronger and freer from what we had all done."

Portland had a lot of truly great summer concerts and

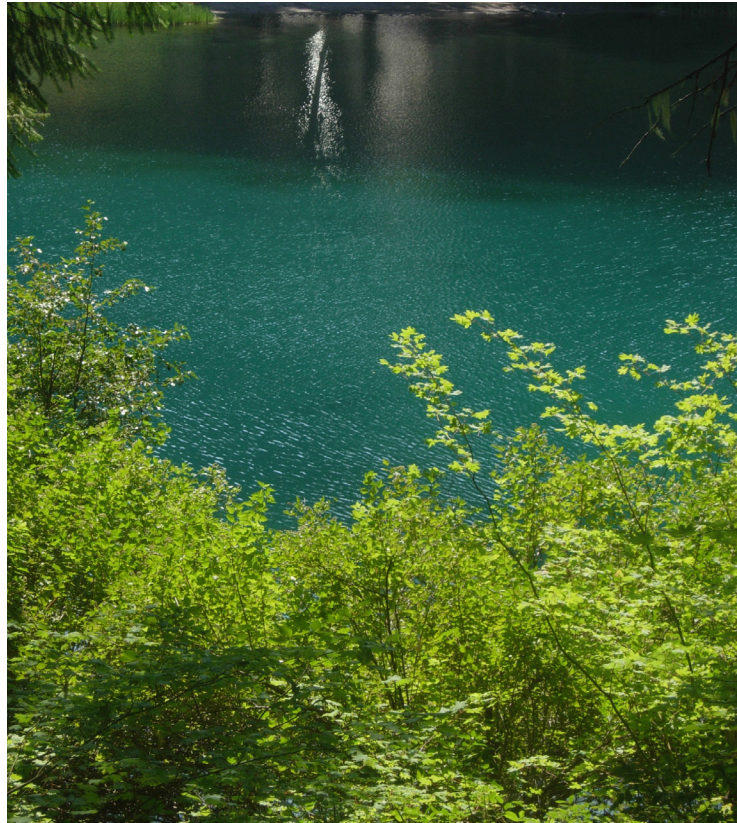


20 • A Few Stories

JUDITH

One year Ruth, Ursula, Evelyn and I decided to drive to Clear Lake and walk around it to the source of the McKenzie River. It was a beautiful afternoon and we arrived in high spirits to see a long dock with dozens of rowboats moored. We immediately decided to row across, and so went in search of the person in charge, a very large and hairy man. He responded to our request with two words, “no boats,” and continued to say “no boats” many times even while we pointed to the many boats tied up at the dock. His two words grew gradually menacing.

Without discussing it we turned away and began walking along the trail around the lake, silent at first, and then gradually regaining our pleasure in the



outing. We would not let

the man ruin our day. We probably exchanged a sentence or two at the absurdity of his refusal, but we didn't dwell on it. At the source, a quiet burbling up of water from underground, we sat and ate our snacks, “no boats” a distant but disturbing memory.

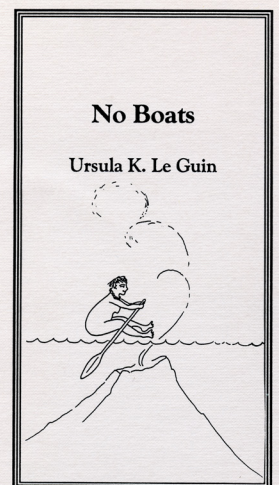
Ursula and I wrote poems about that day; Ursula included hers in a chapbook titled “No Boats.” Mine, “Recipe for a Long Walk to the Source,” ended with: “Remove man from mixture / leaving no stray hairs / nor pieces of skin. / Immediately discard. /

Take the source of the river / the trail around the lake / and add the four women / still happy with each other. / The mixture will be light. / The mixture will be spicy. / Do not blend completely.”

Each of us assumed the man's refusal was directed at her. Ursula thought it was because she was old; Evelyn thought it was because she was

No Boats
(for R & J)

Although the Great Springs of the McKenzie
are not the Springs of the Metolius,
Mrs Alzheimer feels her confusion
blest by an unimaginable color
as of transparent peacocks.
What next? she murmurs,
rowing her no-boat over the volcano.





Black; Ruth thought it was because we were four women, happy to be together. As for me, I thought it was because I looked like a lesbian. Possibly it was all of these. “No boats” became code among the four of us for “stupid patriarchy.” It often came in handy. We’d look at one another, shake our heads, and say” no boats.”

RUTH

One year, Judith’s and my 14th anniversary fell in the interval. Both Ursula and Grace were there and the staff planned a surprise

celebration which included cake and candles, a beautiful papier mâché bowl made out of torn up egg cartons, onion skins, wildflowers and god knows what else. It contained a long ribbon of good wishes from all of them, many quite hilarious. For Judith and me, that would be story enough—we were touched, as we always were, by the generosity and joie de vivre of the staff (and fourteen years seemed like a long time back then...we’re coming up to 43 as we write this).

But the staff never forgot how Judith had wandered in and out of the kitchen the day they were making the bowl, chatting, as usual, and never noticing that they were putting strange things in a blender, then later, patting down a gooey mixture inside a large colander and putting it in a hot oven. Judith, who missed little, had such confidence in those women that whatever they did, she figured, it must be fine.

ANNDEE

One year a writer asked if she could bring her parrot with her. For reasons we can no longer remember, she couldn’t leave it behind and so it came in a large cage and lived with her in her room. It was quite old, and from its name we assumed was a male. On the last day of the workshop it laid an egg. Judith wrote this poem for the staff.

The Writing Workshop and the Egg

for Elissa, Anndee, Kelly, Julie, Becky and Claire

Today the parrot in B 13 laid an egg,
Only the third egg of her 15-year life,
it popped out in the double dorm room
where two women sit at desks—
one under the window
one facing the wall
back to back, scanning the thoughts
that like the yolk of the little round egg
wait and wait to be fertilized.

In the kitchen, you beat up eggs for breakfast *migas*,
crack them into the bread dough,
braid challah on Friday morning and shine it with the whites,
then sprinkle sesame seeds into the glaze.
You’ve fed 80 women for eleven days
and your bodies ache, but still
you pat the sliced eggplant dry with a towel
and joke about your 8-hour pasta salad
which will, at some undefinable moment
during the slow, rainy afternoon,
quicken into multi-colored life.

Upstairs, women are writing their way out of their shells,
mouths wide open with hunger and astonishment.
They tap their keys like little birds emerging
and fill their gaping throats with your food
wanting more, wanting more.
Though the parrot ignores her cold little egg,
plenty is hatching out around her—
pasta salad and poems, stories and Swedish rye—
as if this whole place were one huge egg
washed by the breaking waters of the river,
warmed by the underdown of the grey sky,
and all of us pushing out through torn membrane
into the lives we imagined.

Judith Barrington
Flight of the Mind, 1993



JUDITH

Naomi Nye always wore a beloved gold camel on a chain around her neck. One year, on the last night, late in the evening after she had sung her songs and played her guitar, she joined in a farewell line dance from the lodge around the swimming pool, and watched the moon rise above the tree where the osprey makes its nest. Then the camel was gone. Everyone searched on their hands and knees, with flashlights, but finally we had to give up and go to bed.

Gold and other shiny things had a history of being lost at the workshop—and then found. One year, a pack rat absconded with stray earrings left on a bathroom sink, or a glinting tube of lip gloss, and took them up to its attic lair above Building B. Katharine Salzmann liked to credit Oshun, the Yoruban goddess of love who protects rivers and covets shiny things, especially treasured ones, so that became our explanation for Naomi's missing camel pendant.

A few years earlier, Oshun had snatched a gold pen, given to me on my fiftieth birthday by the 29th St. writers, a group I led for more than two decades. It was the pen I used for my writing and it stayed lost for sev-



eral days while I tried to ignore my sadness. Then, one afternoon, a writer walked right over and found it in the grass. How had she known? She couldn't explain it.



Naomi's gold chain was found on the floor of the dining room at breakfast and so the search for the camel continued there. With less than half an hour to spare before Naomi had to leave for the airport, Jeannette Doob walked purposefully to the swimming pool, put her hand to a crack in the cement, moved the pine

needles aside, and there was the camel, gleaming in the sun.

RUTH

That same summer Jill Christman was camping in the meadow and writing about her fiancé whose grandmother had taken a diamond ring off her finger for him to give to Jill. A month later, he had been killed in a car accident. One morning, she woke up in her tent and the ring was no longer on her finger. All through the rest of the week,



women pitched in to help look. Some dived to the bottom of the pool again and again, feeling in the cracks until their eyes turned red from the chlorine and their fingers went white and pillowy from the cold water. Others searched the meadow, lifting the tent, staring into the tangle of clover and crabgrass, and scooping dried earth from the hollows of deer prints. Jill had a friend bring a metal detector.

All the while, in Judith's memoir class, Jill wrote every day about the ring. She wrote about the man she had wanted to marry, the accident, and the grandmother. She wrote about what it might mean that she had lost it. She left to go home to Eugene without finding it. But, after everything had been packed into the U-Haul, and the staff had taken a last dip in the pool, Sue Ann Hlggens crossed the meadow and let out a shout. There was the ring.

JUDITH

One year Grace just barely made her flight from Vermont—she was so well loved at her small airport the pilot would hold the plane for her—but her suitcase did not; it arrived a few days later. Nothing daunted, she begged items of clothing from her class and we set up a “share box” in the lodge from which she could choose her daily outfit. In the chilly evenings she appeared often in a motley get-up of two skirts, three sweaters, and a pair of leggings.





ANNDEE

The kitchen had its own much loved stories. Like the time Judith popped in, mid-meal, to announce with alarm that there was about to be a “trolley accident.” We speakers of American English were flummoxed—what trolley? where? and how did she know?—until we realized she meant the dish cart, whose tubs were about to overflow with tipsy stacks of plates and bowls. Or the time the wholesale produce place loaded eleven *cartons* of green cabbages instead of eleven cabbages and we added cabbage to everything we could think of. That same year they loaded three *boxes* of dried apricots (48 pounds!) instead of three packages. We had a grand prize for the best recipe that included both cabbage and apricots, which, as I recall, Rebecca won with a delicious pilaf. Cherie, the caretaker for St. Benedict’s, had goats who very much enjoyed the many cartons of cabbage that came their way.

taker for St. Benedict’s, had goats who very much enjoyed the many cartons of cabbage that came their way.

RUTH

A story that moved us all came from a class Grace taught one year. A White woman from a poor background in the rural South read a piece she wrote for the class which included racist language. There were five women of color in the class who were horrified and angry. Grace encouraged them to express their feelings, their hurt and fury, while moving herself to sit next to the White woman. She put her arm around her and encouraged her to hear what was being said and then to respond. The woman had not realized that the words she used had racist undertones; she apologized and said she had learned something important. Grace hugged her and said to her, “I love you.” I did not witness this, but heard about it from someone in the class. They had all learned from Grace, something beyond writing—how to deal with the scary and painful



moments of unconscious racism in a way that is honest and allows for healing.

JUDITH

There are other stories of difficulties we overcame, one of which involves Michelle Cliff, who we hired to teach a class she named “Memory, History, and Imagination” in 1992. Ruth and I were friends with her partner, Adrienne Rich, who we’d been trying to persuade to teach at Flight, but because she had a packed schedule and suffered from severe rheumatoid arthritis she wasn’t able to come. She urged us to hire Michelle instead. Usually we called around to make sure that a teacher we didn’t know personally would be a good fit for the workshop, but because of our connection with Adrienne, we skipped that step and failed to discover the apparently well-known fact that Michelle had a serious drinking problem.

Since much of her work was written as a bi-racial woman, several of the students who signed up for her class were younger, bi-racial women; many came from the East Coast specially to work with her. Unfortunately, after the very first meeting, five of her students reported that they found Michelle’s teaching style “abusive”—that she disparaged or ignored the work of several, including the bi-racial writers, and hand-picked a few favorites to work and hang out with.



I tried twice to talk with Michelle in an effort to save the class from falling apart, but discovered, when I went over to her cabin, that she was drinking heavily even before the morning classes began.

RUTH

After the second class, the five distraught students insisted on leaving the group, at which point Judith and I faced a unique dilemma: How could we console them? What could we offer them for the rest of the week? And how could we keep this disaster from affecting all the other classes? Judith and I were almost as distraught

as the students, who were disappointed and hurt. I remember at one point we all sat close together, shoulders touching, and cried.

But we made it through the week with Judith teaching the five every morning, while continuing with her own class in the afternoons. We succeeded in protecting the rest of the workshop, which carried on as if nothing untoward was happening. We offered the five who had dropped out a chance to come back any year without charge, transportation included, so they could have the week we had promised them, and all of them did.

This incident is recounted in an endnote in Hilary Holladay's biography *The Power of Adrienne Rich*; for some years it caused a rupture in our friendship with Adrienne, a significant loss to us personally. Although it had no redemptive

ending, this story still captures, for us, an essential quality of *Flight of the Mind*. We learned that we could pick up the pieces of a disastrous class—something we had never imagined could happen—and keep going, with crucial support from the staff and from Ursula (who had had her own unsettling interactions with Michelle).

JUDITH

At *Flight* it was easy to feel far away from our everyday lives and to live only in the present. That was one of its many gifts. A different kind of gift were the surprising connections between women, both trivial and profound, bringing their pasts into the little world we had created on the McKenzie River.

I never thought it would happen to me, since I'd grown up and gone to school in England, settling in the US only in 1976. One year, though, the broad British accent that I heard as the participants were arriving and getting registered belonged to a handsome, white-haired woman in her 80s: Silvia Dobson. She had been lovers, and then life-long friends, with the poet, H.D. Silvia had a wealth of stories to tell and often gathered a crowd of eager listeners, so it wasn't until later in the week that we found ourselves at lunch, opposite one another at a picnic table on the terrace





swapping memories of English school days, and discovered that we had both gone to St. Mary's Hall, a girls' school in Brighton. She was a generation before me, so we hadn't crossed paths, but here we were, together in the wilds of Oregon! When I came to live in the U.S. there were no longer people who knew the world I grew up in. Silvia is the only "old girl" I ever met—of course it happened at Flight.

An even greater coincidence brought Maureen Eppstein to the workshop during the time when I was working on my memoir, *Lifesaving*, the story of losing my parents when I was nineteen. When my evening reading came around, I read a chapter about the *Lakonia*, the cruise ship my parents had been on when it caught fire and they were among the passengers who drowned. Maureen, who was originally from New Zealand, came up to me afterwards to tell me that she and her husband had sailed to England on board that very ship, on its last voyage before it was sold

to the Greek cruise line and set sail on its tragic final journey. When *Lifesaving* was published, the book designer, Marcia Barrentine, used small photos as design elements at the beginning of each chapter; she wanted a picture of the *Lakonia* for the last one and Maureen's husband was able to provide it.

RUTH

Our relationship with Brother Daniel (Michael Anthony Thomas), who was in charge of St. Benedict's for all but the first two years of Flight, was a key thread in the fabric that held Flight together. If it were not for his fondness for all of us and his appreciation for what we were about, we would never have had St. Benedict's as our venue, and without it—its affordability, its willingness to let us take over the kitchen and cater the workshop ourselves, its single rooms, its stunning natural beauty—it's hard to imagine there could have been a Flight of the Mind. As luck would have it, he was a writer.



When he arrived to take charge of St. Benedict Lodge it had long been in the hands of an alcoholic and barely-functioning priest who ignored needed repairs. Daniel was forty-nine and had already had a variety of jobs as a “lay brother” of the Western Dominican Province, headquartered in Oakland. Brother Antoninus (William Everson), had recognized his creativity and trained him in graphic arts, in preparation for becoming the director of Albertus Magnus Press. Not long after, Everson left the order and became a renowned letterpress printer, a critic, and a highly respected poet of the San Francisco Renaissance.

Eventually, Brother Daniel, after serving as chaplain at several state universities and traveling around the country giving workshops and lectures on liturgy, art and worship, landed at St. Benedict’s.

We were as fond of him as he was of us, and loved his long, winding, hilarious stories about local characters, including his parishioners, even when we didn’t have time to listen to them.



We got to know him so well, over the years, that he began to confide in us his desire to leave the order, as Everson had done. But by then he was trapped. He had no savings, no retirement fund, and, as he progressed through his fifties, little chance of providing for his old age outside the order. He loved St. Benedict’s and took great care of it, but he was lonely and he wanted something more.

He was warm and extravagant in his gestures, playful, easy to deal with, and not bothered by the afternoon nude swimming (hidden by tall hedges, but he was aware of it). He liked to ride his bicycle in short shorts. He invited Cherie, the woman who cleaned the retreat center, to paint tropical scenes in the shower rooms. We assumed he was gay.

Different priests were assigned to St. Benedict’s for varying periods of time; they conducted weekly services at a small chapel at some distance from the retreat center and helped Daniel with maintenance. One year the priest assigned was a charming and literary guy who greeted us with an “*enchanté*”



and kissed our hands with an impish smile. He adored Ursula's work. He took pleasure in Flight happening at St. Benedict's, and crucially—for both Daniel and us—he and Daniel really hit it off.

The following winter we got an alarming phone call from Brother Daniel. The lovely priest had been recalled to Oakland due to "heart trouble," much to Daniel's distress, and the replacement was a much older, very conservative priest who did not like Flight of the Mind using St. Benedict's. He was threatening to cancel our contract. Michael Giorgio who, with his wife Carolyn, owned Cedarwood Lodge, also phoned us; he suggested we invite Brother Daniel, the new priest, and him to the Log Cabin Inn to discuss, over dinner and plenty of wine, just what the new priest's concerns were. Michael would help us make our case and keep things on an even keel.

And so, once again, on a cold dreary February day we drove the three hours to McKenzie Bridge and back, this time to host a dinner party of fried chicken and mashed potatoes with three bottles of their best red, hoping to win over the new priest.

Michael had helped us prepare. He told us that St. Benedict's needed Flight of the Mind; we were their largest source of income, not just because we rented the entire place, at that time for seventeen days (many groups might rent twenty rooms for a weekend), but also because we paid more than the church groups, per person. We knew we paid more and were glad to do it, but we hadn't realized that they depended on us to replace the roof, paint the buildings, pay for utilities and insurance. This knowledge helped us feel both confident and magnanimous.

The priest's stated concerns were that we took down the crucifixes in the kitchen and dining room, and that we were not a religious group. We had a long discussion, with the help of Daniel and Michael, about how Flight, while clearly not religious, had some overlap with religious practice. We talked about how much we loved St. Benedict's, and how we had cared for it over many years there. And we agreed to leave the



crucifixes up. However, we knew that there was something even more distressing to the priest, something he couldn't quite say. When he referred to the writers being "from San Francisco" we understood that he thought we were all lesbians. By this point, we were on the last bottle of wine. We reassured him that Flight was for all women and attracted both heterosexuals and lesbians. We had no idea of the proportion because it was of no concern to us, but if we had to guess, we said, we'd say it was half and half.

"Lesbian" was a charged word in 1990s Oregon, where the Oregon Citizens Alliance sponsored ballot measures all through the decade, probably the most vicious backlash to gay rights in the country. Measure 9, in 1992, would have amended the Oregon constitution to recognize "homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism and masochism as abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse" and also prevent any "special rights" for homosexuals and bisexuals. It was defeated by only a 54 to 46 vote, after which the OCA brought ballot measures in small communities all over the state, where they were largely successful, including in Springfield, the closest city to McKenzie Bridge.

We were the only diners and alone in the large room except for our young waitperson who came often to fill our water glasses. She arrived just as the word "lesbian" popped out of my mouth and immediately rushed to the kitchen where we could see, when the doors opened, quite a few folks gathered, eager for her report. We didn't assume they were against us; they could just as easily, and probably more likely, be hoping we'd succeed, if for no other reason than that we brought a lot of people every summer to their small community. Sales of gas and supplies at the little store flourished, and high school girls were eager for our dishwasher jobs.

Perhaps the priest was mollified to learn that only *some*, but not *all* the writers were lesbians, or maybe he saw the value in Flight. It could have been because of the concessions we made (including inviting Brother Daniel to welcome the group on the first





night), or because we really reached out to find a connection with him. It could have been solely for financial reasons. But to our great relief, just as we stood up to leave, thinking we'd hear from him soon (perhaps he preferred to give us the bad news by phone?) he gave his consent to our continuing at St. Benedict's.

We had always sought to have a good relationship with the fathers and brothers. Starting in the early years we invited them to come into the kitchen before dinner was put out on the buffet tables, to make plates for them-

selves. The cooks delivered platters of dessert, hot from the oven, to their house just beyond the kitchen. But we'd had a real relationship with Brother Daniel. We looked forward to seeing him. We knew we could count on seeing eye to eye with on the important things. He wrote a poem for Flight every year which we posted on the bulletin board. We sent holiday cards to one another. He retired a few years after Flight ended and went to Kenya for a few years where he sent us stories and photos.

He died in 2020 after long years in a nursing home with dementia, cared for by the order. He is remembered fondly by Flight writers for his signs in the bathrooms urging extravagant showers, as the water came from the river (filtered): "water is plentiful and cheep (sic)" and for his arm signals used to remind us to close the windows when we turned on the heat: one arm going up and one down, then reversed.

Flight's success rested on all kinds of luck and our connection with Brother Daniel was a crucial piece of that good fortune.

21 • A Perfect Ending

JUDITH

Over the years, we had to cope with numerous disasters, a few major, mostly minor. One year the walk-in cooler died in the middle of the night with two weeks' worth of perishables for 1300 meals. It was discovered at 5 a.m. by the head cook who woke Ruth, who unsuccessfully tried to wake the old drunk priest, and then started calling plumbers in Eugene until she finally found one who would come pronto. One year it rained so hard the lodge flooded for a few hours, and everyone pitched in with brooms, sweeping the water out to the river.

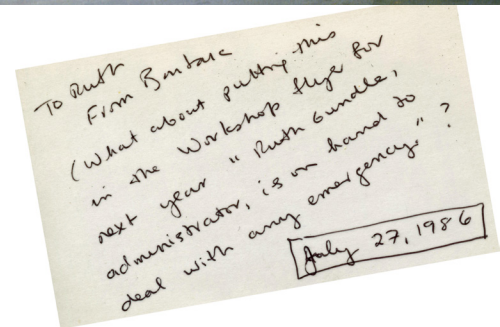
Then there was the year our caravan of U-Haul and cars stopped to fill up before driv-

ing down to McKenzie Bridge and some stranger rammed into a gas pump; although it had nothing to do with us, the fire department detained everyone for two precious hours. Another year KE, disliking the chemicals, decided to skip the swimming pool treatment which was on her list of jobs—and the pool thickened to a bright chartreuse soup. Once, a woman arrived from Southern Cali-

fornia for the first session when she was enrolled in the second, and we had no room to give her; just as we were all frantically trying to figure out what to do, someone called to cancel.

RUTH

There were some serious ones too: like the time a woman began to miscarry and Anndee drove her to the hospital in Eugene in the early hours of the morning. Or the year the





sister of one of our cooks died by suicide the night before the workshop began and we were left deeply shaken while having to find a replacement cook in six hours. One year a participant stopped taking her medication and became seriously destabilized; the staff took her under their wing and helped her back to her former self. Once—and only once—a teacher turned out to be a disaster. That story is told in the previous chapter.

But the year 2000 was a golden year. Grace Paley was there, Gish Jen, Marjorie Sandor, Dorianne Laux, Allison

Joseph, Aleida Rodriguez, Helena Maria Viramontes and Barbara Sjöholm, who had taught in the beginning as Barbara Wilson. And of course Judith, as usual, taught a class each week. Ursula was there as a guest of Flight; she hadn't wanted to teach but couldn't bear to miss it. The sun shone every day. No problems, not one—just the usual joyful, meaningful, two weeks.



However, much was happening in our personal lives. Judith's brother John was dying. The year before, my brother Michael had nearly died. He lived alone in Seattle and my sister Barbara and I had taken turns going up to be with him during his months-long hospitalization and rehabilitation. In addition to running Flight of the Mind we both had much on our plates. Judith was teaching and writing, I was running the Eighth Mountain Press, and we had both taken on major responsibility for Soapstone, a nonprofit that we were central to creating and which was now operating a writing retreat for women in Oregon's Coast Range. We had no leeway in our lives. We were no longer in our mid- and late-thirties, as we had been when we started Flight—we were now fifty-three and fifty-seven and we needed some breathing room.

JUDITH

At the end of that glorious 2000 session we announced that we would take a year off but would be reconvening in 2002. That fall John died and I began to deal with some chronic health issues. Gradually, over that difficult year we realized that we had come to a place in our lives where we couldn't count on pulling off



Flight anymore. It wasn't that we couldn't do it; we couldn't count on being able to. Gone was the confidence that had carried us along blithely for seventeen years. Although it relied heavily on the staff, it couldn't happen without both of us; neither of us could do it on our own.

RUTH

The "year off" was genuine: we had no idea when we planned it that 2000 would be the last year. But in retrospect, we were grateful that we had eased ourselves out of it gently, and had eased everyone else out gently too....and that we never had to have that final leaving day which would have been too unbearably sad.

In December of 2000 I met with Anndee for dinner in New York in the theatre district to tell her. I was there for a sales conference meeting for the press, and Anndee, who was living in Philadelphia by then, took the train up to meet me. We both cried. Soon afterwards, Judith and

I sent out a long email with the news and received back hundreds of heartfelt notes of appreciation and grief.

JUDITH

Ruth and I painstakingly put together materials and organized a meeting for anyone who was interested in taking it over. Women came down from Seattle and up from the Bay Area and we spent a day talking about it, answering questions, giving out packets of information. But in the end, there were no takers.

Still, we hold out hope that one day Flight of the Mind or something rather like it will be hatched again. We hope this history might plant the idea in the minds of another feminist generation.



It's felt like a death in the family, trying to digest the retirement of Flight. I have never done anything, gone anywhere, involved myself with any group, that has been more gratifying, more uplifting, more peace-inducing, more inspiring, than spending those weeks in Oregon during the four summers that I attended. I suddenly have intense regret that I didn't come every summer.... Judith, Naomi, Dorianne, Lucille—what mentors I have had, and how grateful I am.

—Christy Shepard

The first year I went to Flight, I entirely underestimated the impact working in harmony with eighty women would have on my life. We talked and thought about nothing but writing. You gave us no “shoulds,” only permission. The last year of Flight, when I received the acceptance letter, I sat in my car and sobbed. I was that grateful. —Jan Priddy



It is with sorrow but deep understanding that I have just read The News. I have lit a better-than-usual candle to help me think about it. This was, no doubt, a very very difficult matter to decide. I salute you.... Would that we all could be so wise. What luck to have had a chance to participate in the BEST GATHERINGS in the name of writing there ever, ever will be on the face of the planet! ...I dreamed about you two. No, I was not begging you to change your minds. I was telling you, you saved my life in '94 and how glad I was I decided to come ahead with the broken bone and all last summer. But really it was unthinkable not to at the time, in waking life. ...All of us who feel a part of Flight will be responsible for re-creating a part of it wherever, however, we can. —Sally McNall

I cherish the times I spent at Flight, the relationships I formed there with other women, and the relationship I began to form with myself and my work. Those days on the McKenzie Rive gave back to me a sense of pleasure and wonder.... That it happened in the loving company of other like-minded women was the sweetness none of us will ever forget. I'll miss it. But I'll give thanks all my life that I landed there. —Deborah Miranda



Thank you, Ruth and Judith, saints and Mothers Superior, for putting the river and its songs in our reach. Thanks for the hundreds of hours of deliberation and action that made Flight of the Mind the best place in the known world for a woman to learn writing, —Sue Ann Higgins

22 • *What Remains*



RUTH

What remains? The memories of course, that sustain us all. The work begun there, the work that flourished later because of what was gained there. The model for how a writing workshop can be taught (many participants would go on to teach creative writing). The skills acquired for how to read work to an audience. How to critique work in a group. All that, much of which has been passed along in writing groups, blogs, and from friend to friend.

When we started this history of Flight in 2019 we sent out emails asking for stories. Email didn't exist when we began Flight in 1984, everything was done by mail and phone. It only became established in the last few years before the last summer, so we didn't have email addresses for most of the participants, only decades-old street addresses. We relied on the writers whose emails we had to pass on our request to those they were in contact with. We knew there was a web of connections among those who had been at Flight—twenty, thirty, even thirty-five years later— still

very much alive, that we could rely on.

And as it turned out, a great deal of what was sent to us for this project was *about* that network. Along with recollections about the classes, the food, the river, there were stories about a friendship that began there, a writing partner or life partner met there, relationships still going strong. Here are a few of those stories.

From **Jane Rubin**: “This photo of Grace and the Gracegirls, framed, has been displayed in the bookcase in my bedroom since I came home from Grace’s

My week at Flight of the Mind was one of the most enjoyable stretches I have ever spent writing poetry. I was the only person there from Mississippi and spent a great deal of time lovingly explaining exactly how you say “pie.” Such memories...I turned twenty-nine there and on one of the last nightly readings a new friend read and dedicated her new short story to me for the occasion...The single phone in the small pantry behind the kitchen where each night I called my new love (for new loves are the only ones who take collect calls everyday)...The dark and glorious trails through the woods, ferns as large as elephants...The wonderful vegetarian fare...My solitary monk’s room over the lodge which I had won in the first day’s drawing and where I slept with the sounds of that wild river below me. Most memorable perhaps is the egalitarian and joyous manner in which all workshop sessions were handled that continues to be a model for me.

—Salita Bryant



workshop in 2000, first in my home in San Francisco and now here in Tampa. It represents to me, among other things, an extraordinary moment in the long and winding journey of my writing and not writing. It also manifests the staying power of sisterhood. We were only together for a week, but I can still name all of the women, except one, and I'm still in touch with many of them."

From **Jessica Inclan**: "I met two of my most important friends in 1997 when I studied with Marjorie Sandor: Kristine Whorton and Darien Hsu Gee. Kris is my best friend, even though we have never lived in the same state. We see each other

3 to 4 times a year, and read each other's work. Darien and I no longer live in the same state, but I see her once or twice a year, and we are currently working on a collaborative project. I'm not sure what it was about the summer of 1997 at MacKenzie Bridge, but it was likely all the rain that kept us indoors, in the dining room, writing together at tables. We bonded, and now, twenty-two years later, we are still metaphorically there, writing and laughing. What a gift Flight was to me."

Alesia Kunz wrote to us about a group of four who got up at the crack of dawn and drove to a nearby lake, stripped off their clothes and slipped into the cold water. One at a time, they maneuvered under the waterfall, treading water to hold themselves in place, while



Now I know why I put on my Flight of the Mind T-shirt yesterday, the first of 2001: some innate part of me readying myself for your announcement, which I read today. While Flight will no longer appear in the manner that you brought to a wonderful fruition, it will certainly reside in my heart and writer's bones as watermarks of immense importance in my life as a writer and otherwise.

—Amy Schutzer

the others watched. Then they walked through the woods to a hot spring where they lolled and luxuriated in the heat until it was time to return for breakfast. In this photo of the "early morning swimmers" the two at the center are Alesia and Melanie who became lifelong friends. "We didn't know then that we would be friends twenty years and counting. Writing real letters. Having phone conversations, texting. Sending photos. We've met up in Massachusetts by the water, in New

York at the beach, in the woods in Woodstock, at my mom's house in Delmar, New York. Melanie came from Brooklyn to my home in Berkeley for my 70th birthday dance party."



my partner, Janice Gould, about making a small book in a clamshell box of "Alphabet," from Janice's *Earthquake Weather*. We often visited Catherine in her studio on Vashon Island, Washington, and attended talks she did when May Day books were displayed in Portland. At some point she created themed "subscriptions." As her patrons, a few dozen of us would receive exquisitely designed and executed pamphlets and multi-fold booklets of hand sewn pages, ranging from "plant dyes from the kitchen," "flower recipes for a garden party," "ingredients for a night



blooming garden," or a chart for planting by the moon and stars. Just as important was the friendship that was forged and deepened over the years, with every letter or card including Catherine's growing wealth of botanical knowledge, hand crafted and shared as beautiful works of art.



From **Paula Friedman**: One afternoon in the 1999 session, on the walk back from Ursula's class for lunch, I started chatting with, and almost instantly bonded with, three or four women, including Vandana Singh and Maya Khankhoje, who would become writing and Internet colleagues ever since.

From **Linda Besant**: I met Janice Gould in 1994, one of the years she taught poetry at Flight of the Mind, though I wasn't in her class. We met on the lawn one evening between the end of dinner and the evening program. I was drawn to a nimble melody dancing above the ever-present song of the river. There was Janice



with her accordion, playing one of my favorite Croatian folk dances. And so, some of us danced every evening after dinner; I brought out my guitar and we played for songfests. Janice gave her evening reading from *Beneath My Heart*, “Stars dot my fur, my eyes glow with pinpoints of fire.” She was a small, shy, soft-spoken ember. We sprouted a new friendship in the heart-wide-open way that Flight somehow made possible. When Janice and her partner Mimi Wheatwind moved to Portland, they lived with me and my partner, Martha Goetsch, for a time, and I saw day by day the discipline,

focus and sheer persistence that Janice brought to her writing, her music, her teaching, her visual art, and her many friendships. The four of us became like family, a closeness we could fall right back into no matter where Janice and Mimi’s endeavors in library science and college teaching led them. Soon after the release of *Seed*, her final book of poetry, Janice died from cancer in 2019. Her many Flight of the Mind sisters mourn her passing.

From **Judith Arcana**: Those summer weeks fostered longtime relationships, sometimes crossing generations as well as state lines, creating friendships that have lasted. Rebecca Shine and I met because we both were taking a break outside. Beginning as strangers, we stood and talked for a long time on the green at St. Benedict’s; my memory is of the intensity of the conversation; our talk was instantly personal and mutually understood as valuable. We’re more than two decades apart in age; I’m the elder. Both of us had come to Oregon from elsewhere and were in

My first time at Flight of the Mind

I didn’t know I was hungry until I was fed.

I joined the line at mealtime and the women who stood behind the food—they spread excitement—maybe it was the nervousness of us first-timers in translation—writing was the subtext of their greetings. Suddenly I wasn’t Asher’s mother. I wasn’t Jackie’s widow. I wasn’t the nice lady at the library. I was a writer and that was all and everything it took for me to be welcome and to be.

My first time coincided, I believe, with Ursula’s. When she said “workshop” as if only a fool wouldn’t know its meaning, I thought “carpentry.” When she said write a creation story, I walked in the dark and returned with what would become the title piece of my first book.

I didn’t know that Flight could travel home with me. I didn’t imagine that I could return. But it did and I did.

Years later there is still a picture of the McKenzie on my desk, a talisman, a promise.

—Teya Schaffer

McKenzie Bridge for quite different reasons, Rebecca as a staff member, I as a workshop student. We live now in adjacent neighborhoods in Portland, longtime friends, deeply connected, talking and thinking and growing together. Sue Ann Higgins and I met because we had both enrolled in Word/Sound, my first Flight workshop, led by Theresa Clark and Carletta Wilson in 1990. I'm nearly twenty years older than Sue Ann, but both of us went on to extensive experience as teachers and administrators. Our friendship bloomed when I moved to Portland in 1995. Sue Ann—she too had come to Oregon from elsewhere—got here before me, and became a guide to necessities: bakeries, parks, long walks. We now live within easy distance, good friends who walk many blocks and talk many hours. I'm grateful for the gift of these friendships, a gift from Flight of the Mind.

From **Irene Reti**: "I met one of my closest writing friends at Flight of the Mind in 1997 in Judith Barrington's memoir class. We have now walked a path as writers together for more than twenty years, writing about our lives with feminist courage and mutual support. Flight of the Mind created the community where that could happen, along the banks of the river, with blooming foxglove in the summer heat. What a delicious and precious place."

JUDITH

What remains for me, among many treasured memories, are the images I carry of the meadows and forest surrounding St Benedict's including the labyrinth mowed by Brother Daniel. They have crept into my poems.

The Poem

It hides in my heart, waiting as if
in the small circle at the middle
of the labyrinth. I walk towards it

but the path turns away by a purple foxglove
and I must follow the winding that will
in the end lead me to the center.

It smells of cedars and honey'd skin,
cappuccino with grated chocolate,
the brine of its own body's betrayal.

Like a chestnut horse, it hides in the shadow,
one white sock and the moist gleam of an eye
announcing its steady presence.

It has lodged in my heart like a stone in the shoe:
each time the great muscle contracts
I feel it rubbing the same tender spot;

there is no avoiding it—no limping or hopping,
no shaking it to a more comfortable place,
no stillness that can ease the bruise

except the stillness of a motionless heart.
It is the door behind which somebody stands
waiting to kiss and be kissed.

—Judith Barrington

Acknowledgments and Permissions



RUTH and JUDITH

Our profound gratitude to everyone who joined us in creating and sustaining Flight of the Mind, and especially:

Barbara Sjoholm (then Barbara Wilson), who, along with Judith, taught the first session in 1983, and returned many times to teach fiction and memoir, and who shared our commitment to Flight's feminist literary path.

Evelyn C. White, who taught first in 1986 and returned nearly every year for the next decade with classes that were inspiring and rigorous. She was a guiding spirit for the workshop.

Valerie Miner, another sister feminist activist from the early days of the Second Wave and a dedicated writing teacher, who helped shape Flight in the early years and returned to teach many times.



Ursula K. Le Guin (1929–2018), who taught during eight summers; one year she taught both sessions. She gave so much to Flight of the Mind—and yet her reply to our appreciation for her generosity was always that she got more than she gave.

To all the other outstanding writers and gifted teachers:

Kathleen Alcalá

Sandra Benítez

Becky Birtha

Beth Brant (1941–2015)

Olga Broumas

Rosellen Brown

Andrea Carlisle

Theresa Clark

Lucille Clifton

Toi Derricotte

Barbara Drake

Terri de la Peña

Gish Jen

Allison Joseph

Molly Gloss

Jewelle Gomez

Janice Gould (1949–2019)

Pamela Gray

Gillian Hanscombe

Mimi Khalvati

Dorianne Laux

Suniti Namjoshi

Naomi Shihab Nye

Grace Paley (1922–2007)

Terri de la Peña

Aleida Rodriguez

Lucinda Roy

Cristina Salat

Marjorie Sandor

Lynne Sharon Schwartz

Sarah Schulman

Charlotte Watson Sherman

Cathy Song

Helena Maria Viramontes

Carletta Wilson

Elizabeth Woody

Anndee Hochman, who helped run the summer workshops on site from 1992 through 2000, and became an indispensable part of our team.

To the staff, including **Anndee**, gratitude does not really say it. Something corny but true: you are forever in our hearts, especially some of you—you know who you are.

Head cooks and assistant cooks:

Char Breshgold
Mary Davis
KE Edmisten
Dorianne Galarnyk
Elissa Goldberg
Camille Goshien
Elaine Hogg
Suzy Kitman
Susanne Kredentser
Rose McClain
Kelly Myers
Mary Scott

Cooks and dishwashers:

Hannah Ashley
Ann Binninger
Eithne Barton
Cathy Brown
Madeline ffitch
Sheila Gillronan
Dorianne Golarnik
Tracy Grimes
Liz Grovner
Rebecca Gundle
Sue Ann Higgins
Julie Huffaker
Sabrina Lawler



Hillary Mullins
Rachel Nelson
Susie Rankin-Bohme
Jennifer Rhoads
Sarah Sharp
Rebecca Shine
Claire Smith
Jane Talbot
Pamela Vernon
Thalia Zepatos
Shelise Zumwalt



Brother Daniel Thomas (1941–2020), director of St. Benedict Lodge from the late 1980s on, who allowed us to make that very special spot on the McKenzie River Flight of the Mind’s summer workshop home, and for his zany stories.

Mike and Carolyn Giorgio, owners of Cedarwood Lodge, for their warm hospitality to us, our teachers and participants, and for their friendship.

We are deeply grateful for the generosity of major donors to the Flight of the Mind Scholarship Fund: **Harriet Denison** and **The Denison Family Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation**; **Ursula K. Le Guin**; **Nancy Nordhoff**; **Joan Drury**; and **The Lamb Foundation**.

Hundreds of women were able to attend because of donations of \$10 to \$1000 way too numerous to list. But we do want to thank by name some of the major scholarship donors: **Judith Arcana**, **Linda Besant**, **Pat Cason**, **Suzannah Dalzell**, **Nelle Engoron**,



Hella Fluss, Marilee Fosbre, Martha Goetsch, Ellen Goldberg, Gish Jen, Susan Johnson, Cynthia Hartwig, Sue Ann Higgins, Jazmyn McDonald, Sally McNall, Lindsay Pyfer, Lucinda Roy, Roussel Sargent, Izetta Smith, Suzanne Sowinska, Peggy Starr.

Photos by: Barbara Gundle, Tee Corinne, Judith Barrington, Anndee Hochman, Char Breshgold, and many others; all the photos are identified to the best of our ability, both photographers and subjects. We partly relied on participants to send us photos.

Grateful Acknowledgement is made for permission to use the following:

Page 24, "Opening Pome," page 34, "Letter to the Short Fiction Workshoppers," page 44, "McKenzie River Ceremony," page 88, "The Group-Picture-Taking," page 102, "No Boats," by Ursula K. Le Guin, © Ursula K. Le Guin. Used by permission of the Estate of Ursula K. Le Guin.

Page 35, "Lessons From Lucille" by Andrea Potos, © 1999 by Andrea Potos; used by permission of the author.

Page 39, "The Orgasms of Organisms" by Dorianne Laux, © 1998 by Dorianne Laux, later published in *Smoke*, Boa Editions, 2000. Used by permission of the author.

Page 42, "To Lue at 10" by Lucille Clifton, © 1999 by Lucille Clifton 1999; used by permission of the Estate of Lucille Clifton.

Page 42, "California Girls" by Janice Gould, © 1996 by Janice Gould, was later published in a somewhat revised form as "Blood Sisters" in *Earthquake Weather*, University of Arizona Press. Used by permission of the Estate of Janice Gould.

Page 44, "MacKenzie River," by Naomi Shihab Nye, © 1993 by Naomi Shihab Nye; used by permission of the author.

Page 46, "For You," by Mimi Khalvati, © 1999 by Mimi Khalvati; used by permission of the author.

Page 66, "What We Are Given," by Marion Winik, © 1992 by Marion Winik; used by permission of the author.

Page 103, "The Writing Workshop and the Egg," by Judith Barrington, © 1993 by Judith Barrington; used by permission of the author.

Page 127, "The Poem," by Judith Barrington, from *Horses and the Human Soul*, Storyline Press, © 2004 by Judith Barrington; used by permission of the author.

Photographs

Photos are identified in the order they appear on each page starting at the top left to right, unless otherwise noted. We've named the subject, year, and photographer where we know them. If you can fill in any missing information, we'd be grateful to have it. Email: soapstonewriting@gmail.com.

Unless another location is specified, the photos were taken at St. Benedict Lodge, McKenzie Bridge, Oregon. When the location is Cedarwood Lodge, that is also in McKenzie Bridge, Oregon. Women are identified within photos from top left to right unless otherwise noted.

Cover starting at top right, then left to right)

Lorraine Bonner, 1993

Participant writing in her dorm room, 1992

Grace Paley and Ursula K. Le Guin, 2000

St. Benedict Lodge, 1998

Judith Barrington's class, 1992

Christy Shepard and participant, 1992

Janice Gould, 1997

Participant writing by the river, 1999

Page 2

Meadow at St. Benedict Lodge, 1998

McKenzie River at St. Benedict Lodge, 1992

Page 3

Naomi Shihab Nye's class, 1994

McKenzie River at St. Benedict Lodge, 1992

Page 4

Flowers around the swimming pool at St. Benedict Lodge, 1998

Chapter 1 • Our Wild Idea

Page 7

Ruth Gundle and Judith Barrington, on the terrace at St. Benedict Lodge, 1993

Judith Barrington, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Page 8

Ruth Gundle, from article about The Eighth Mountain Press in *Pacific Northwest Magazine*, 1989



Chapter 2 • What Would a Feminist Writing Workshop Be?

Page 9

Noel Hanlon and other participants on terrace, 1997

Christy Shepard and another participant on terrace, 1998

Two participants in dining room, 1996

Page 10

Regina Lo and Evelyn C. White, 1993

Katharine Salzmann and participant, 1998

The five teachers, first session 1992: Evelyn C. White, Naomi Shihab Nye, Jewel Gomez, Andrea Carlisle, Judith Barrington



McKenzie River as seen from Cedarwood Lodge, photo by Char Breshgold

Chapter 4 • Getting Off the Ground

Page 16

Barbara Wilson, (later Barbara Sjöholm), Ruth Gundle, Judith Barrington, 1993

April Sinclair, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Page 17

Two women in the dining room, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Karen Brummel-Smith and Margaret (Muggs) Regan, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Page 18

Evelyn C. White, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Barbara Wilson (later Barbara Sjöholm), 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Judith Barrington, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Page 19

Elizabeth Ross and Ruth Gundle, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Chapter 5 • More and More Women Came

Page 20 (top to bottom on left side, then top to bottom on right side)

Participant, 2000

Participant, 1995

Participant, 1993

Ingrid Tischer, 1998

Bette Husted, 1996

Carol Brunoe, 1995

Page 21

Florence Bookhultz and her guide dog Tango, 1994

Melanie Hope and Alisia Kunz, 2000

Eleanor Haas and Virginia Cheng-Li, 1997

Flight of the Mind brochure, 1999

Page 22

Participant and Ann Vermel, 1994

Laura Hershey and her caregiver, 1993

Roussel Sargent and Mary Pharr, 1997

Alice Hardesty and Yvonne Martinez, 1997

Page 11

Participant and Shirley Kishiyama, 1992

Judith Arcana and Holly Pruett, 1995

Chapter 3 • The Perfect Place

Page 12

The terrace from above, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

A well-loved (and well furnished) dorm room, 1996

Page 13

Stone fireplace chimney detail, 1985

St. Benedict buildings and lawn, 1994

Meadow with foxgloves, 1998

Page 14

Canada geese on the wall of the lodge, 1997

Participants on the terrace, 1992

Page 15

One of the cabins at Cedarwood Lodge, 1992

Page 28

Valerie Miner, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Ursula K. Le Guin, 1996

Andrea Carlisle, Judith Barrington and Jewel Gomez at a teachers' lunch meeting, 1992

Page 29

Elizabeth Woody, 1994

Charlotte Watson Sherman, 1996

Toi Derricotte, 1997

Page 30

Cathy Song, 1997

Andrea Carlisle, 1993

Page 31

Mimi Khalvati, 1999

Rosellen Brown, 1997

Barbara Thomas, Gish Jen, Janet Thornburg in Gish Jen's class in the lodge, 2000

Page 32

Evelyn C. White, 1991

Naomi Shihab Nye, 1992

Class scene on the lawn, year unknown

Page 33

Lucinda Roy, 1997

Olga Broumas, 1999

Sarah Schulman, 1997

Page 34

Hella Fluss, Kathleen Herron, Grace Paley, class in Grace's cabin at Cedarwood, 1995

Kathleen Worley and participant, 1998

Page 35

Rosa Warder and participant, in class at Cedarwood, year unknown

Suniti Namjoshi, 1991

Participants during a class, 1992

Page 36

Participants during a class, including, on the right, Eleanor Haas and Yvonne Martinez, 1997

Evelyn C. White and Helen Tevlin, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Class on the lawn in front of Ruth and Judith's cabin, 1995



Participant, 1992

Page 23

New Age Journal, 1997

The Oregonian, 1995

Lambda Book Report, 1993

The New York Times, "Living Arts section," August 7, 1997

Chapter 6 • The First Night

Page 24

Judith Barrington at mic in lodge, year unknown

Ruth Gundle at mic in lodge, year unknown

Anndee Hochman at mic in lodge, 1999

Page 25

Grace Paley, 1995

Allison Joseph, 2000

Page 26

Evelyn C. White, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Chapter 7 • The Classes

Page 27

Judith Barrington's class meeting on the lawn, 1997

Grace Paley with participants, 1993

Class meeting in the lodge, 1997



Page 37

Circle of chairs on the lawn ready for a class, 1996
 Ursula K. Le Guin, 1994
 Ursula K. Le Guin and Judith Barrington in Ursula's cabin at Cedarwood, teaching Rhythms of Writing class, 1993

Page 38

Lucille Clifton with participants in the lodge, 1999
 Class meeting on lawn, 1994
 Participant and Dorianne Laux, 1998

Chapter 8 • And They Wrote

Page 39

Participant and Carol Weliky, 1991
 Critique group on the terrace, 1995, on far side of table, Marissa Martinez, Dorothy Ellis Barnett, Jane Bailey
 Participant on the terrace, 1994

Page 40 (top to bottom on left side, then top to bottom on right side)

Ann Dudley in foreground & participant, 1996
 Critique group on the lawn, Linda Elkin second to left, 1994
 Participant writing on the lawn, 2000
 Participant writing on the terrace, 1993
 Participant writing on the terrace, 1994

Page 41 (top to bottom on left side, then top to bottom on right side)

Laura Hershey and her assistant, in class, 1995
 Critique group on the terrace, on left, Betty Husted and Nelle Engoron, 1994
 Critique group on the terrace, 1996, on close side Valerie Miner and two participants; on far side, two participants, Dorothy Mack, participant, Jean Bradley
 Critique group on the terrace, 1989
 Two participants in a critique group, Joanna Bressler on left, 1996
 Two participants in a critique group, 1997

Page 42

Electric Grass, booklet from Dorianne Laux's class, 1998
 Participant writing on the terrace, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle
 Judith Arcana, writing in the lodge, 1993

Page 43

Thirteen Moons on Turtle Island, booklet from Toi Derricotte's class, 1997
 Johnetta Banks, writing in her dorm room, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle
 Eva Gold and Andrea Carlisle, 1993

On Words Like Wings, booklet from Judith Barrington's class, 1993

Page 44

Secrete: A Compendium, booklet from Gish Jen's class, 2000
 Five women in Cedarwood cabin after class: Joan Petersen, Monza Naff, Mimi Maduro, Noel Hanlon, participant, 1998
 Participant on a deck at Cedarwood, 1994

Page 45

Ground Cover, booklet from Lucille Clifton's class, 1999
 Mimi Maduro, 1992
 Cristina Salat, 1992
 Evelyn Wexler, 1996
 Marissa Martinez, 1995
 Faith Adiele, 1993
 Andrea Potos, 1995
 Booklet from Janice Gould's class 1994

Page 46

Ceremonies, booklet from Ursula Le Guin's class, 1989

McKenzie River, 1994
Lorraine Bonner, 1995
Woman writing on terrace, 1991
Nora Eskes, 1998
Woman writing on terrace, 1999
Kelly Myers, Dorianne Laux's class 1998

Page 47

Women writing on terrace, 2000
Two participants, 1993
Her Tongue Unwound, booklet from Naomi Shihab Nye's class, 1993
McKenzie River, date unknown
Jillian Wilkowski, 1992
Judith Montgomery, 1993
Lee Schore, 1998
Jane Looney, 1997

Page 48

Work, booklet from Olga Broumas's class (cover and first two pages), 1999
Mimi Khalvati writing by river, 1998
Ferns, date unknown

Page 49

Booklet from Mimi Khalvati's class, 1999
McKenzie River from terrace, 1992
Big Trouble, Big Trouble, Big Trouble, booklet from Lucinda Roy's class, 1996
McKenzie River, 1992
Trillium, McKenzie River Recreation Trail, date unknown

Page 50

Class meeting on lawn, 1998
Three women writing on the terrace, 2000
McKenzie River, date unknown, photo by Janice Gould

Chapter 9 • And They Ate!

Page 51

Rosa Warder and others at the lunch buffet table, year unknown
Dining Room scene, 1994



Page 52

Participant and Teya Schaffer eating lunch on the terrace, 1994
Lunch on the terrace, 1998
Woman eating lunch and writing on the terrace, 1994

Page 53

Susanna Rankin Bohme, on duty at the buffet table, 1997
Lunch buffet table, date unknown
Red three-ring binder, "Kitchen Bible," 1990–2000

Chapter 10 • The Staff

Page 54

Kitchen scene, 1993, from left to right: Kelly Myers, Anndee Hochman, Claire Smith, Rebecca Shine, Elissa Goldberg
Kitchen scene, 1985: from left to right: Ruth Gundle, KE Edmisten, Mary Scott, Susanne Kredentser

Page 55

Mary Davis and Claire Smith unloading the U-Haul, upon arrival at St. Benedict's, date unknown
Anndee on duty behind the buffet table, 1994

Page 56

Anndee Hochman making announcements before the evening program, 1996
Anndee Hochman serving soup at the lunch buffet, 1998



Staff lunch on the deck, 1997, from left to right: Cathy Brown, Claire Smith, Susanna Rankin Bohme, Rebecca Gundle, Mary Davis, Madeline ffitich, Anndee Hochman, Kelly Myers

Page 57

Char Breshgold, Rebecca Gundle and Kelly Myers performing a piece in the kitchen they wrote for the staff, 1999

Making pizza, 1993, staff from left to right: Rebecca Shine, Kelly Myers, Julie Huffaker, Claire Smith, Elissa Goldberg, Anndee Hochman

Page 58

Elissa Goldberg with an apron decorated by the staff for her, date unknown

Elissa Goldberg, 1994

Page 59

Claire Smith, 1995

Julie Huffaker, 1992

Staff having lunch on the lawn, 1993, Claire Smith, Kelly Myers, Julie Huffaker, Eissa Goldberg, Anndee Hochman, Rebecca Shine

Page 60

Mary Scott, Susanne Kretentser, KE Edmisten, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Mary Davis, 1996

Page 61

Char Breshgold, 1998, photo by Anndee Hochman

Char Breshgold, 1998, photo by Anndee Hochman

Staff photo, 1995, top row: Eithne Barton, Claire Smith, Anndee Hochman, Madeline ffitich, Kelly Myers; bottom row: Cathy Smith, Elissa Goldberg, Rebecca Gundle

Page 62

Kitchen scene, making challah, Kelly Myers right, 1998

Kelly Myers staffing the dessert end of the buffet, helping Florence Bookhultz, 1996

Page 63

Madeline ffitich and Rebecca Gundle, between 1995 and 1997

Rebecca Gundle, in the kitchen, 1997

Page 64

Madeline ffitich, year unknown

Cathy Brown, 2000

Page 65

Cathy Brown, in the kitchen, 2000

Staff lunch on terrace, 1998, from left to right: Madeline ffitich, Cathy Brown, Camille Goshien, Elaine Hogg, Anndee Hochman, Rebecca Gundle

Chapter 11 • The Evening Readings

Page 66

Lucille Clifton, evening reading, 1999

Evelyn C. White, evening reading, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Katharine Salzmänn, evening reading, 1999

Page 67

Participant practicing for her evening reading, 1992

Lunch meeting to plan the evening's participant reading, Ruth Gundle at end of table, 1992

Elizabeth Ross practicing for her evening reading, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Rebecca Shine helping Keiko Lane practice for her evening reading, 1996

Page 68

Ruth Gundle, on right, working with a writer to pare

down her piece for the evening reading, 1998

Participant, evening reading, 2000

Deborah Miranda, evening reading, 1998

Page 69 (left side, then right side)

Alice Hardesty, evening reading, 1996

Unoma Azuah, evening reading, 2000

Harriet Denison, evening reading, 1998

Participant, evening reading, 1999

Page 70

Group of readers accepting their applause at the end of the evening reading, Shirley Kishiyama in the center, 1992

Kathy Krauss and Mary Slayter, after evening reading, 1998

After the participant evening reading, euphoria, year unknown

Page 71

Participants hugging after the evening reading, 1992

After the participant evening reading, euphoria, Alison Joseph on the left, 2000

Judith Barrington with Jillian Wilkowski and others, after the evening reading, 1992

Loa Millard and April Sinclair after the evening reading, 1988

After the participant evening reading, euphoria, 1997

After the participant evening reading, euphoria, 1997

Chapter 12 • The Flight of the Mind Bookstore

Page 72

Flight of the Mind mugs set up to be fetched by those who purchased them, date unknown

Allison Joseph asking advice on a sweatshirt, 2000

Books displayed in the lodge before the evening program, date unknown

Page 73

Participants choosing T-shirts, Ruth Gundle second to right, 2000

Page 74

Ruth Gundle, in the cabin that was bedroom, office and warehouse for Ruth and Judith, 1998

Participants looking at books, Alison Seevak in foreground, 1994



Chapter 13 • It Was Just Us

Page 75

Claire Smith ringing the bell for mealtime, 1972

Judith Barrington and Grace Paley at the ping pong table; to the left of them can be seen the door to the little phone booth, 1995

Page 77

Rebecca Gundle ringing the bell for mealtime, 1995

Page 78

Anndee Hochman making announcements before the evening reading, 2000

Dorm life: Barbara Thomas, Betsy James, Jan Priddy, 2000

Chapter 14 • Who Could Write All Day Here?

Page 79

Pamela Gray at the pool, 1994

Participant at the pool, 1994

Sarah Cortez at the pool, 1995

Jewel Gomez and Rosa Warder, 1992

Rebecca Gundle diving, date unknown

Page 80

Sahalie Falls on the McKenzie River, Willamette National Forest, date unknown, photo by Char Bresh-



gold

Tamolitch Pool on the McKenzie River, Willamette National Forest, 1993

Ursula K. Le Guin, on the hike to Tamolitch Pool, 1993

Sandy Polishuk and Colleen Sullivan on the hike to Tamolitch Pool, 1997

Page 81

Koosah Falls on the McKenzie River, Willamette National Forest, 1998

Becky Birtha, Grace Paley, Ruth Gundle on a hike to Tamolitch Pool, 1993

Two participants and Susan Johnson on a hike, date unknown

Backs of Ruth Gundle and Sandra Benitez looking at Sahalie Falls, 1998

Scene along the McKenzie River Trail, 2000, photo by Char Breshgold

Page 82

Rafting the McKenzie River, Judith Barrington in the front, Evelyn C. White behind her, 1994

Participants in rafts rounding the bend before the St.

Benedict terrace, 1991

Flight rafters, 1994

Page 83

Three women at Belknap Hot Springs, Lee Schore on left, 1999

Two participants at Cougar Hot Springs, Willamette National Forest, 1999

Judith Barrington and Marjorie Sandor ready to go fly fishing, 1997

Marjorie Sandor ready to go fly fishing, 1997

Page 84

Grace Paley playing ping pong, 2000

Grace Paley playing ping pong, 2000

Grace Paley playing ping pong, 1995

Judith Barrington and Grace Paley playing ping pong, 1995

Page 85

Participant playing pool with McKenzie Rose (border collie) watching, 1994

Grace Paley and Lorraine Bonner playing pool, 1993

Participant playing pool, 1998

Judith Barrington playing pool, 1993

Rebecca Gundle playing pool, date unknown

Participant playing pool, 1998

Elizabeth Woody playing pool, 1998

Page 86

Participant taking a nap on the terrace, 1999

Barbara Wood taking a nap by the river, 1997

Three women looking at the river, 1995

A woman on the terrace looking at the river, 1996

Anne McDonald looking at the river from the terrace, 1995

Judith Arcana listening to the river on the terrace, 1995

Chapter 15 • It Was a Year-Round Project

Page 87

Judith Barrington and Ruth Gundle, 1998

Staff in U-Haul truck before it's loaded up to leave St. Benedict, 1994

Page 88

Holly Prueff and Mary Clare writing on the terrace at Loma Linda, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, 1996

Mar de Jade Retreat, Chacala, Mexico, main building, 1998

Page 89

Soapstone Writing Retreat for Women, kitchen and Wind Loft, Oregon Coast Range, 1997

Chapter 16 • Some Flight Traditions

Page 91

Lois Rosen and Brittney Corrigan, 1999

Dancers at midsummer celebrations, Pat Cason on right, 1995

Dancers at midsummer celebrations, Linda Besant on left, Janice Gould, second from right, 1995

Grace Paley, participant, Mary Clare, Amy Schutzer, midsummer celebration, 1995

Participant on terrace table with group, midsummer celebration, 1999

Participants gathered by the river, Yvonne Martinez third from left, Sandy Polishuk fourth from left, 1998

Participants dancing, Janice Gould in front, Linda Besant on right, 1999

Participants sitting on the terrace, Jane Todd on right, date unknown

Page 92

Women ready for group photo, third from left, Suniti Namjoshi, fourth from left, Gillian Hanscombe, 1991

Two participants at group photo afternoon, 1993

Judith Barrington and Naomi Shihab Nye, group picture preparation, 1992

Two participants at group photo afternoon, 1992

Judith Barrington getting ready to take the group photo, 1992

Four participants, third from left Roussel Sargent, on right, Judith Arcana, in foreground, Ruth Gundle, group photo afternoon, 1993

Grace Paley and Ursula K. Le Guin, waiting for the group photo, 1995

Page 93

Women of Color Lunch, 1994, on far side, two in the middle, Maria Eliza Hamilton and Marissa Martinez, on near side on left, Evelyn C. White

Anndee Hochman and Elissa Goldberg behind the



buffet table with challah they have made, 1998, photo by Char Breshgold

Participant with her birthday bouquet of wildflowers wrapped up in the paper table covering inscribed with birthday wishes, 1991

Page 94

Anndee Hochman presenting a birthday cake to Nancy LaPaglia, on the terrace with staff singing and blowing bubbles, 2000

Gretchen Legler reading to the staff in the kitchen, Anndee Hochman and Claire Smith in aprons, 1992

Chapter 17 • The Rhythm of the Week

Page 95

Left side: Maria Eliza Hamilton, 1995, Betty Roberts, 1995, Jean Bradley and participant, 1994; right side: Musawa, 1995, Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, 1995, Becky Birtha and Juanita Sanchez, 1986

Page 96

Terrace scene, Cherry Hartman on left, 1994

Andrea Carlisle, 1993

Naomi Shihab Nye and Grace Paley, 1993

Participant and Maggie Chula, 2000

Participant, Linda Elkin, Jeannette Doob, 1997

Page 97

Lorraine Bonner and Suniti Namjoshi, 1991

Judith Barrington, 1999

Participant and Charlotte Watson Sherman, 1994

Mary Slayter, Gail Robinson, Mimi Khalvati, 1998



Group musical gathering: Musawa seated playing flute; Linda Besant seated playing guitar, Janice Gould seated playing accordion, 1995
Participant, 2000

Page 98

Linda Besant and Janice Gould, 1995
Participant, 1999
Participant, 1998
Four participants, Nancy Peate second from right, 1999
Dancing in the lodge, 1999
Dancing in the lodge, 1999

Chapter 18 • The Last Night

Page 99

Judith Barrington, 1995
Anndee Hochman, 1998
Ruth Gundle, accepting applause of participants, Karen Brummel-Smith, second from right, 1992

Page 100

Grace Paley, 2000
Barbara Sjolholm, 2000
Ursula K. Le Guin, 2000
Staff: Thalia Zepatos, Rebecca Shine, Claire Smith, Mary Scott, Anndee Hochman, Elissa Goldberg, taking applause, 1992

Naomi Shihab Nye, 1995
Elizabeth Woody, 1994
Dorianne Laux, 2000

Page 101

Gish Jen, 2000
Evelyn C. White, 1992
Lucille Clifton, 1999
Mariana Ruybalid, 1998
Joan Peterson, Lee Schore, 1998
Terri de la Peña and Elizabeth Woody, 1994
Olga Broumas and Monza Naff, 1999
Marjorie Sandor, 1997

Chapter 19 • Leaving Day

Page 102

Ruth Gundle and participant hugging goodbye, 1998
Irene Reti and a participant hugging goodbye, 1998
Farewell to the bus taking participants to Eugene airport and train station, 2000
Naomi Shihab Nye and Grace Paley hugging goodbye, 1993

Page 103 (going down left, then right)

Katharine Salzmann, 1998
Ruth Gundlle, 1997
Claire Smith, 1994
Hannah Ashley, 1994
Cathy Brown, 1994
Anndee Hochman, 1994

Page 104

Scrabble game between sessions, Elissa Goldberg, Claire Smith, Judith Barrington, and others, year unknown
Claire Smith, Madeline ffitich, Anndee Hochman, Camille Goshien at Sahalie Falls, 1998
Ursula K. Le Guin, Kelly Myers, Grace Paley, washing dishes between sessions, 1993

Page 105

Staff goodbye to the river, 1998
Elissa Goldberg and Evelyn C. White, 1991

Page 106

Staff sprawl on Ruth & Judith's front yard: Claire

Smith, Kelly Myers, Cathy Brown, Rebecca Gundle, Mary Davis, Madeline ffitich, Susanna Rankin Bohme, Elissa Goldberg, 1997

Cathy Brown with Evelyn C. White in background, 1985

Madeline ffitich, 1995

Claire Smith, arriving back in Portland with the U-Haul, 1998

Chapter 20 • Some Flight Stories

Page 107

Clear Lake, year unknown, photo by Char Breshgold

Page 108

Rebecca Shine, Ruth Gundle, Judith Barrington, Julie Huffaker, anniversary cake, 1993

Page 109

Elizabeth Woody searching for Jill Christman's ring, 1994

Naomi Shihab Nye, Andrea Carlisle, Judith Barrington, Jeannette Doob, 1992

Participants searching for Jill Christman's ring, 1994

Page 110

Cameron Denny, sitting by McKenzie River, 1997

Grace Paley, 1995

Ruth Gundle, Anndee Hochman, Judith Barrington, 1998

Page 111

Class meeting on the lawn at St. Benedict, year unknown

Judith Barrington, 1997

Page 112

St. Benedict Lodge as seen from the river, 1999

Ursula K. Le Guin and Ruth Gundle, year unknown

Page 113

Waterfall along the McKenzie River trail, year unknown, photo by Char Breshgold

Silvia Dobson, 1987, photo by Barbara Gundle

Page 114

Judith Barrington, Carol Brunoe in foreground, 1995

A priest and Brother Daniel, 1997

Page 115

Brother Daniel on tree stump, 1994



Detail from wall paintings in the shower room, 1993

Page 116

Judith Barrington, 1993

McKenzie River from St. Benedict terrace, 1997

Page 117

Ruth Gundle, 1998

St. Benedict Lodge, seen from the river, holiday card sent by Brother Daniel, year unknown

Page 118

"C" Building, St. Benedict Lodge, as seen from swimming pool, 1992

Chapter 21 • A Perfect Ending

Page 119

St. Benedict Lodge, 1992

Fire truck and Ruth Gundle at gas station, 39th & SE Stark, Portland, 1986

Mopping the lodge, The Great Flood, 1996

Page 120

Dorianne Laux and Grace Paley, 2000

Participant on the terrace, 1997

McKenzie River and meadow east of the terrace, St. Benedict Lodge, 2000

Page 121

McKenzie River, looking downstream from St. Benedict Lodge terrace, year unknown

Natural Brancusi, near St. Benedict Lodge, year unknown



Page 122

Ruth Gundle and Judith Barrington, 2000
 On the grounds of St. Benedict Lodge, 1998
 Source of the McKenzie River, year unknown

Chapter 22 • What Remains

Page 123

Teya Schaffer by the McKenzie, St. Benedict Lodge terrace, 1993

Page 124

Jane Rubin's framed photo of the "Gracegirls," (Grace Paley's class 2000)

Early morning swimmers: participant, Alesia Kunz, Melanie Hope, Gail Robinson, 2000

Page 125

Letterpress book by Catherine Alice Michaelis, 2021
 Letterpress book by Catherine Alice Michaelis, 2021
 Janice Gould with her accordian, on terrace, 1995

Page 126

Linda Besant and Janice Gould, singalong in the lodge, 1997
 Class meeting on the lawn, 1998

Acknowledgments and Permissions

Page 128

On left: Ursula K. Le Guin, 1999, Barbara Sjolholm, 1992; on right, Evelyn C. White, 1991, Valerie Miner, 1994

Page 129

Anndee Hochman, Judith Barrington, Rebecca

Gundle, 2000.

Ruth Gundle, Anndee Hochman, 1997

Page 130

Participant writing on the terrace, St. Benedict Lodge terrace, 1988, photo by Barbara Gundle

Page 131

Naomi Shihab Nye, on right, with Lisa Suhain Majaj, 1992

Page 132

Lucinda Roy, on right, with Terry Martin, 1996

Page 133

Cathy Song, on right, with participant, 1997

Page 134

Gish Jen, on left, with Jan Priddy, 2000

Page 135

Mimi Khalvati, on left, with Mary Slayter, 1998

Page 136

Evelyn C. White, on right, with participant, 1992

Page 137

Grace Paley, on ritght, with Lauren Crux, 1993

Page 138

Dorianne Laux, on right, with participant, 1998

Page 139

Sarah Schulman, second from right, with participants, 1997

Page 140

Ursula K. Le Guin, on left, with participant, 1992

Page 141

Elizabeth Woody, center, with participants, 1994

Page 142

Lucille Clifton, center, with participants, 1999

Group Photos



Flight of the Mind, July 25 – August 2, 1987, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, July 24 – 31, 1988, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, August 13 – 20, 1989, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, July 29 – August 5, 1990, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, July 28 – August 4, 1991, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session, July 26 – August 2, 1992 participants, teachers and staff
(The second session group photo, August 31 – September 7, is missing.)



Flight of the Mind, first session , July 11 – 17, 1993, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session , July 11 – 17, 1993, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session, June 15 – 22, 1994, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session , June 24 – July 1, 1994, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session , June 16 – 23, 1995, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session , June 25 – July 2, 1995 participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session , June 14 – 21, 1996, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session, June 23 – 30, 1996, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session , June 13 – 20, 1997, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session, June 22 – 29, 1997, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session, June 19 – 26, 1998, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session, June 28 – July 5, 1998, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session, June 18 – 25, 1999, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session, June 27 – July 4, 1999, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, first session, June 19 – 23, 2000, participants, teachers and staff



Flight of the Mind, second session, June 25 – July 2, 2000, participants, teachers and staff