

# Inspiring Women

Summer Issue:  
Women of Words &  
Language



**FAWCO**  
Inspiring Women Worldwide

**CELEBRATING LIVES ACROSS THE FAWCO WORLD**

# INSPIRATION IN THIS ISSUE

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FAWCO would like to thank [Esquire Group](#) for underwriting **Inspiring Women** as our Premier Sponsor. This issue we have an interesting column on page 15 written by Esquire Group’s President, Jimmy Sexton.



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## Inspiration from the Editor



One of the wonderful things about being part of FAWCO is the connections that you make with amazing women from across the world. For most of the year, **Inspiring Women** HQ is in cyberspace and we communicate with each other via email or

Distribution Manager and has been tasked with finding new and exciting ways to build the readership of the magazine. More details in the next few months.

So I hope your summer goes really well and that this issue of **Inspiring Women** will accompany you as you travel to vacation spots near and far.

Best wishes, *Liz x*

Liz MacNiven,  
[inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomen.editor@fawco.org)

Skype. So it was a real pleasure to get the team together in the flesh in the Hague recently at the IM.

This was especially true since we were welcoming a new member to our merry band! Karen Boeker is originally from Germany, a former member of AWC Mumbai, a current member of AWC Denmark and lives in Sweden!

So, as with many FAWCO teams we are now based in three different time zones which makes planning our meetings fun, of course!

Karen has joined our team as



## From the Cover Coordinator

The cover photo for this issue represents the joined forces of two talented, inspired and inspiring women:

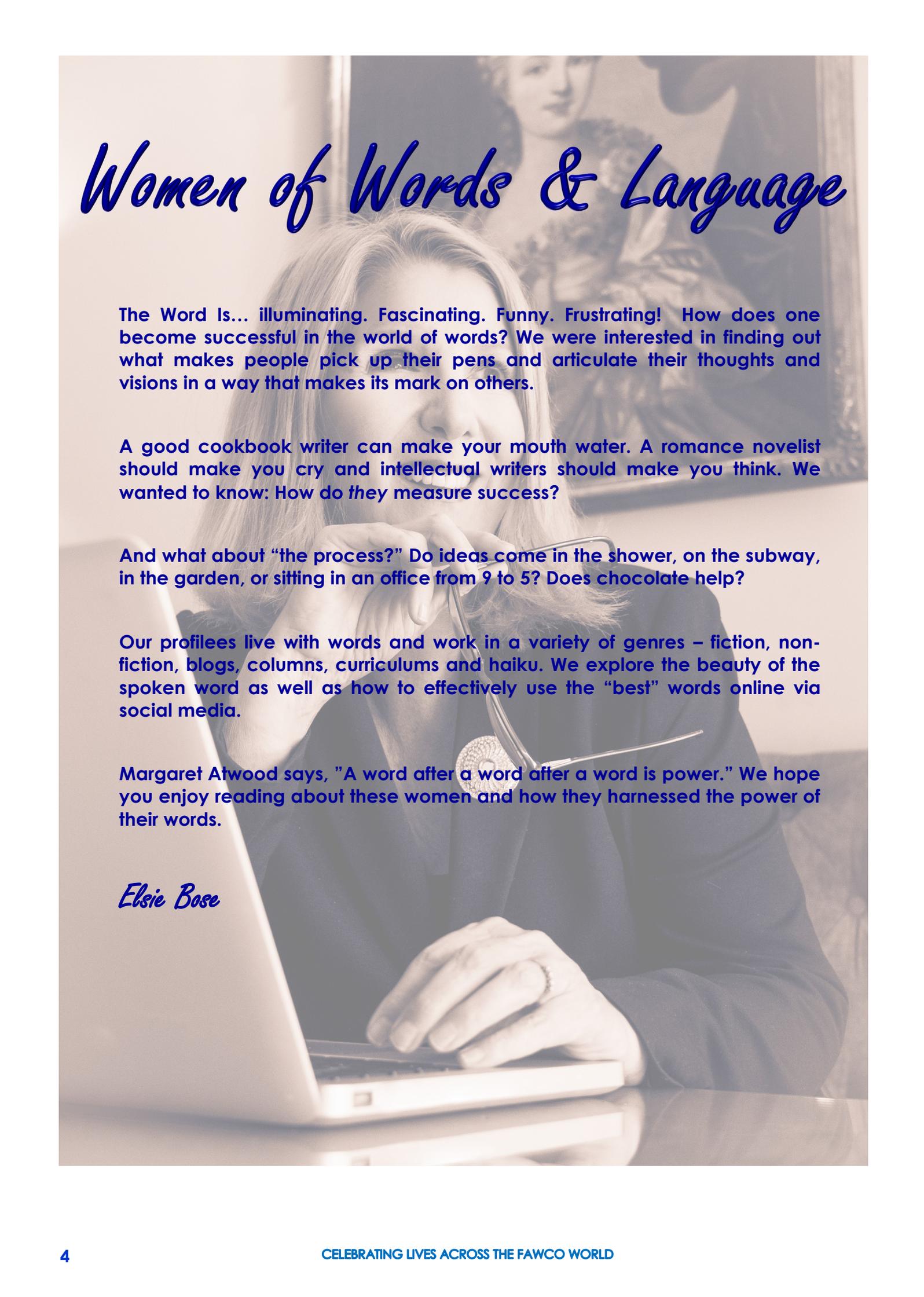
**Julia Goldsby**, AIWC Cologne Youth Member, is behind her camera lens catching the moment when her mother, Robin, adds the final touches to her last book, *Manhattan Road Trip*.

**Robin Meloy Goldsby**, AIWC Cologne Member, uses her computer for serious writing; however, she always carries a little notebook in her purse where she writes down everything she likes to remember.

If you have a photo that you would like to see on a future cover of **Inspiring Women**, you can reach me, Marie-Bénédicte Luxem, at [inspiringwomen.cover@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomen.cover@fawco.org). There are full details of photo requirements on page 66 of this magazine.

**Please note: we can only accept portrait orientation images.**





# Women of Words & Language

The Word Is... illuminating. Fascinating. Funny. Frustrating! How does one become successful in the world of words? We were interested in finding out what makes people pick up their pens and articulate their thoughts and visions in a way that makes its mark on others.

A good cookbook writer can make your mouth water. A romance novelist should make you cry and intellectual writers should make you think. We wanted to know: How do *they* measure success?

And what about “the process?” Do ideas come in the shower, on the subway, in the garden, or sitting in an office from 9 to 5? Does chocolate help?

Our profilees live with words and work in a variety of genres – fiction, non-fiction, blogs, columns, curriculums and haiku. We explore the beauty of the spoken word as well as how to effectively use the “best” words online via social media.

Margaret Atwood says, “A word after a word after a word is power.” We hope you enjoy reading about these women and how they harnessed the power of their words.

*Elsie Bose*

## Paris: Haiku – Life in 17 Syllables



### ANNA EKLUND-CHEONG

**American Women's Group in Paris and  
Association of American Women in Europe  
Paris, France**

**From: St. Paul, Minnesota**

**Lives: Croissy-sur-Seine, near Paris, France**

I grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, loving Camp Fire Girls, summer camp, piano lessons, and reading fantasy and sci-fi books. I earned my BA in political science and international relations from the University of Minnesota in 1982. After marrying in 1985, I worked several years at a law books and textbooks publishing company, writing newsletters for their sales and marketing departments. My husband, Dan, and I moved our family to Stamford, CT, in 1997; and then overseas to Croissy-sur-Seine, a small town near Paris, France, in 2000, for my husband's job with a French pharmaceutical company, when our sons were eight and nine years old.

I was a dedicated volunteer at the American School of Paris (ASP) for over a decade, including being a "poetry coach" for the middle school. I also wrote and edited the school's PTA newsletter for many years. After my sons went off to university in the US, I lost their school as the center of my immediate community. I joined the American Women's Group (AWG) of Paris and AAWE, both FAWCO-affiliated clubs, to rebuild my social circle. I have been on the Board of AWG for four years.

I have always loved all kinds of poetry and frequently read children's poetry to my sons when they were young. When my children left the nest, I found I had some extra time on my hands and a desire to do something creative. Without having to rush home from Paris to meet the school bus, I spent more time just relaxing in Paris when I was there. And because I have enjoyed haiku since my junior high school days, I started jotting down impressions of life in Paris in haiku-like form whenever I was in the city. I like longer forms of poetry, too, but haiku always seemed a special challenge – distilling an experience into just 17 syllables (or fewer!).

While walking through the Tuileries Gardens one afternoon about five years ago, I noticed how my shoes were getting dusty and that inspired a complete haiku to pop into my head—true story! Later that summer, I asked my older son to snap some photos in the gardens to illustrate the haiku; he was home from college for summer vacation and is an avid photographer. Because I liked both creative writing and explaining French culture to all my houseguests, I thought I would start a blog about French culture for Anglophones and include my haiku and my son's photos. My blog, at "ParisHaiku.com," was born. Here's that haiku from my stroll through the Tuileries Gardens that inspired me to start the blog: *heliotropes doze // splayed across spindly-legged chairs // stick out dusty shoes*. I am not saying that is a good haiku, just that it was among my earliest efforts!

Since starting my ParisHaiku.com blog, I have gained a following of over 460 people. Several local newsletters and online forums have published my haiku. When I started seriously researching haiku, I discovered a whole community of haiku poets around the world who organize themselves into societies and publish journals. As I learned to write better haiku, I started to have some of my little poems accepted for publication in these edited journals. Now that I have had some haiku published, I have the confidence to teach haiku writing to others. Last year, I gave a series of well-received haiku-writing workshops for 7<sup>th</sup> graders at ASP, which I will do again this year; and I hope to do a workshop for AWG soon, too.

Friends now ask me to write haiku for them, usually to mark some special occasion. I am always honored to be asked, to get these little “commissions,” if you will. There is, however, some pressure and stress about meeting others’ expectations regarding what makes a “good” haiku, so I don’t accept every request. Most recently, an educational non-profit organization in Paris asked if I would write a haiku in honor of their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary; it will be used on their promotional materials for the celebration.



I was amazed to find a worldwide haiku community that organizes conferences, holds workshops, hosts readings, publishes journals and books, and sponsors haiku contests. This community of dedicated haiku poets has also been working steadily over several decades to redefine what modern haiku are in the English language.

(Note: “Haiku” is both singular and plural; there are no “haikus.”)

I discovered that what we learned about haiku as schoolchildren is considered mostly wrong today! Most of us learned that haiku are 17-syllable poems written about nature, composed of a 5-syllable line, followed by a 7-syllable line, and ending in another 5-syllable line. In the Japanese language, most haiku do indeed have 17 “sound units,” and many do seem to be about nature. Ah, but so much really is lost in translation!

Because the English and Japanese languages are structured so differently, the short “sound units” that make up Japanese words really aren’t equivalent to what we call “syllables” in English, which can be very long. Further, English has so many single-syllable words that a poem of 17 of them often becomes an overly-wordy or “heavy” poem compared to one written with 17 Japanese “on” (the phonetic sounds counted in Japanese poetry). Japanese haiku traditionally include a reference to the season that the poem is set in, and that often ends up being a reference to something happening in nature: snow falling, cherry trees blooming, fruit ripening, birds migrating, etc. But seasonal references in haiku can also include, for example, the mention of holidays, special foods eaten at specific times of the year, and other human-made aspects of life which might not be considered “nature.”

I also discovered that old dogs can learn new tricks! I had to unlearn what I'd learned years ago about what constituted a good haiku and re-learn what the current haiku community considers better practice! Modern, English-language haiku are short poems, of up to about 17 syllables or so, that largely use the juxtaposition of two or more images (or other sensory details) to convey a poet's emotion on observing something in his or her world. Exact syllable counting is not necessary. That's the definition I've cobbled together from several sources to guide me in writing haiku. What constitutes best-practice is still evolving and subject to healthy debate in the haiku community's journals. But that makes writing haiku even more fun and challenging!

My greatest achievement, so far, has been to win an "Honorable Mention" award in a haiku contest held in Washington, DC. The "award" included having my haiku printed and displayed in several locations in the landscaped flower beds that dot DC's sidewalks, along the streets in the downtown business district, behind The White House. I have also published enough haiku to be listed in the online *Living Haiku Anthology*.

Can you write haiku, too? Of course, you can! There are many free resources online to get you started. Once you have five to ten haiku that you are happy with, you can start submitting them to the editors of more than a dozen haiku journals to see if you can get them published. I have had recent success getting my haiku published in *Acorn*, *The Heron's Nest*, and *Blithe Spirit*. You can also subscribe to some of the printed journals and learn what good haiku are by reading hundreds of them. You can read whole issues of *The Heron's Nest* online for free, here: <https://www.theheronsnest.com/index.html>



A classic book for both beginners and seasoned poets on writing good haiku is Jane Reichhold's *Writing and Enjoying Haiku: A Hands-on Guide*, Kodansha International, 2013. A wonderful printed journal to subscribe to is *Frogpond*, the journal of the Haiku Society of America, <http://www.hsa-haiku.org> Another is *Blithe Spirit*, the journal of the British Haiku Society, <http://britishhaikusociety.org.uk/journal>

## GETTING TO KNOW ANNA

### **An event in my life that made a big difference, and why it did:**

Losing one of my younger sisters to brain cancer several years ago almost instantly made me a less materialistic person. Her passing made me lose my desire to possess more "stuff," and instead made me want to collect more experiences and spend more time with my remaining loved ones. As awful as it is to lose someone we love, the loss, while always being sad, can make us want to live a life of deeper meaning.

### **A personal motto you live by and how it**

**affects you:** The Golden Rule is still one of the

best mottos to live by, in my opinion: Treat others as you would like to be treated. Generally, this means treating everyone you meet with kindness and respect. I try to do that, while holding all others to the same standard of behavior towards me, too. And, I give everyone the benefit of the doubt, until they prove me wrong!

### **The one book I would save from the flames, and why:**

I would save *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeline L'Engle, because it was my childhood introduction into the fantasy and sci-fi genres of novels from which I continue to derive so much reading pleasure.

**The writer I would most like to meet and ask a question of:** I would love to meet Jane Austen and ask her why, when her books demonstrated what a keen observer she was of human foibles and folly, she could not overcome her own society's prescribed notions of who would make a suitable match for her life's journey and marry purely for love's sake. It broke my heart when I read that the author of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* turned down a marriage proposal from a man she had true feelings for because others considered his "prospects" were poor. Her books had the happy endings desired by her heroines, but her own life did not.



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# London: Characters Evolve for a Novelist



## SHELLEY KIRILENKO

***American Women's Club of London, England***  
**From: Missoula, Montana, but spent many years in Washington, DC**  
**Lives: London, England**

I grew up outside of Missoula, Montana, in a neighborhood where livestock outnumbered people. I first became involved with words when I was nine years old. My fourth-grade English teacher had just blown in from out of town, and I knew right away that she was different and quirky. She told us fantastical tales of her crazy family members – one of her five-year-old son driving their car around and around the block until apprehended by a thuggish police officer – and I was instantly inspired to write my own tales. This teacher encouraged me to just let 'er rip and write whatever came to me. The best thing of all was that she liked my stories and pronounced me a writer. I've considered myself a writer ever since.

From an early age, I also loved learning foreign languages, which has always felt like cracking a magic code to me. After graduating with a degree in German, I spent three years in Vienna, improving my German and teaching English at a local high school. From there I moved back to the States, but this time to the East Coast. In Philadelphia I continued studying German (at Penn) and fell in love with a Ukrainian who had only just arrived from the Soviet Union the week before. We married three months after we met. (I've always been a little impulsive.) My husband got a job in Washington, DC, so off we sped. During my nineteen years in DC I did many things: I became a ballroom dancer and a marathon runner and the mother of a rambunctious son. I also joined a Quaker meeting and watched many a soccer game.

In September of 2015, my family and I moved to London for my son's incipient soccer career. Now my son is at a soccer academy in Spain, and my husband and I are still in London.

Every book I write – and I've so far written five – represents a different phase of my life. When I first start working on the book, the protagonist is myself and the events are the things that have happened





to me during a given period. By the time I've written several more drafts of the book, the protagonist has evolved into a character in her own right, and the experiences have shifted towards more universal life experiences. It takes a lot of drafts to get something right. Writing is all about rewriting.

My greatest achievement was receiving a Master's of Creative Writing degree with distinction from City University of London, which I just finished. The emphasis of it was on crime thrillers and as part of my degree, I wrote a novel entitled *Brought to Light*. I'm currently rewriting my novel – a murder mystery set in a Quaker meetinghouse – and then plan on shopping the book around to agents.

I've also written a book on infertility (*The Blue Kimono*) that has helped many people with the emotional strains of fertility treatments.

Words are really powerful. They can evoke strong emotions in the reader, and even societal change. A book can make someone feel more

understood and less lonely; can change the course of someone's life, or even cause a death sentence to be issued against the writer. A book can prevent or provoke a war. I've discovered that the writer is a more powerful person than I ever realized.

Becoming a writer involves the willingness to make yourself vulnerable. You have to be willing to bare your soul to strangers, not knowing in advance how they're going to react. The reader always knows when you're holding back or not being authentic. You need to have lots and lots of patience and dedication, and thick skin doesn't hurt, either. Above all else, you need to persevere even in the face of bad reviews or rejections. You have to be willing to tell your story even when it seems like no one wants to hear it.

## GETTING TO KNOW SHELLEY

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** When I was a senior in high school, I won a trip to Nuremberg, Germany. I stayed with a host family for a month and traveled all around Germany with other American students. That trip – which was the first time I had been out of the country - opened up the world for me and made me hungry to travel. I've been learning languages and traveling ever since.



**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** As I go about my life, I think of the legacy I'm leaving behind for my son. Would he be proud or mortified to have a mother who did X? I view every action I take through that prism.

**What is your favorite word and why?** My favorite word is humor, as it's the only thing that gets me through life sometimes.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** I would ask Salman Rushdie what gave him the courage to write *The Satanic Verses*.



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# First Take : New Member Reflections



New members join our clubs regularly and we thought we would give them a voice here in Inspiring Women. These stories are about or from women, often new to expat life, who have something to tell us. This time our feature is by Celeste Bennekers who is a member of the American Women's Club of Antwerp, Belgium (Region 4).

## CELESTE BENNEKERS

**American Women's Club of Antwerp, Belgium**  
**From: Dallas, Texas**  
**Lives: Antwerp, Belgium**

The Indian summer air shimmies through the wide boulevard of the Meir - leaves on the towering trees dance. Shop lights glow as the final shoppers are deposited, hands full of bags and eyes wide with excitement. The Saturday evening beckons. My dress bounces around my knees and my heels click on the pavement I've passed over often - always pushing a stroller laden with cups, snacks and a discarded jacket or shoe. Tonight, a tiny gold purse dangles from my wrist. Freedom. With a final nudge from the Belgian winds at my back, my husband and I pass through the arched ceiling and into the Paleis op de Meir.

Upon entering, warm smiles are extended my direction from women I've known for a few months, but it feels longer. The nature of expat life - a life without borders - lends itself to beautiful openness of friendships. We ascend the carpeted winding staircase, my manicured hand gliding along the wooden bannister. I blink at the elaborate chandelier with anticipation. I hang my jacket. Breathe.

"You look great, it's going to be great," my husband whispers.

It's my first FAWCO event and I don't know what to expect. He squeezes my hand and we enter the *Spiegelzaal*, the Hall of Mirrors.

I freeze on the parquet floors. My jaw drops and I gaze at the opulence of the elegant room. Glistening chandeliers anchor the moulded ceilings. The sensual curves of the room are highlighted in gold.

My husband and I catch the attention of another wanderer - grey-haired and wild-eyed; she has a smile as wide as the Atlantic Ocean. She is a FAWCO member from Germany. She asks us the standard



questions: "Where are you from? What brought you here?" My husband and I answer with longish-brevity - explaining he was born in the Netherlands, but his parents moved to the US when he was two. We had a three-year rotation in the Netherlands, returned to Texas for 18 months, now we're back in Belgium. We lob the ball back to her side of the court.

She takes us on a journey across time zones, continents, and decades. The litany of places she's lived - breathed, experienced, loved - was extensive. As she illustrates each chapter in her life, our heads lean closer and our eyes peer deeper. At the end of her story, we stand tall and breathe deep. An appreciative smile tugs at the corner of my lips. Not only is she a woman of expat life - the true definition of courageous, strong and defiant - but also what I am quickly learning to be a FAWCO woman - one who takes all that knowledge and energy to transform it into something more meaningful and worthwhile than her own agenda.

"So - where now, shall we find the champagne?" She squints a devious smile. This woman deserves a toast.

The American Women's Club of Antwerp hostess - Marja Reunis-de Rechter - opens the evening. She captivates the audience with her words - the energy of the room bounces across the mirrors surrounding us. She introduces Alain Honorez, the head of the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp, and he begins his speech.

Each word spoken from his lips has been transformed by his heart. With a hand on his chest, he articulates his appreciation of the American Women's Club of Antwerp - their support and generosity. Breath is held. Smiles widen. Heads tilt. After thunderous applause, a beautiful girl - pencil-thin and dressed in black - approaches the open space at the front of the beautiful room. The music begins.

She is a moving work of art - she stretches, leaps and expresses herself and the music. Tiptoeing across the historic parquet floors, she paints a portrait with her body and expressions in her face. Two boys enter the floor. The movements are the opposite of their female counterpart - intense, calculated and defined.

The performances conclude and applause echoes through the room. Bouquets are presented. Bows to the audience given.

Before dessert, Carol Brazle, head of the Caring Hearts Project, takes the stage. She introduces a doctor from a local hospital. "I remember, many years ago. . . the patient had a young son, around six years old. . . and I had to tell him his mother was sick. He screamed and hid from the 'man in the white coat'; from then on I never wore my white coat when I delivered news."

Tears brim at our eyes. Carol describes the original starkness of the hospital lounges where diagnoses were delivered. The AWCA recognizes the importance of creating comfortable lounges for patients with color, fabrics and children's corners.



A check for 10,000 euros is presented to the doctor by the club's President, Kanika Holloway. Cheers and applause fill the beautiful room.

The room swells with laughter and camaraderie. Women throw back their heads and dance fingertips on each others' arms. The evening concludes with well wishes - promises of visits to Spain or Germany - and a swap of business cards between the men.



As I descend the spiral staircase into the warm glow of the lobby, I am caught by the beauty of a statue. A woman - with a baby in her arms and a child tugging at her leg - stands in marble between the windows of the evening. A woman's position is complex - an unrelenting desire to care for others, even more than ourselves - but the expression on her face is calm, peaceful and elegant. Arm in arm, my husband and I step into the Antwerp evening. I cast a final glance at the Paleis and smile. Inspired by the beauty of the evening, we click our heels

towards the cathedral of the Antwerp Train Station. From here, the messages, hopes and inspiration of the evening will be cast into the world.



**"I really fall in love with my characters, even the bad ones. I love getting together with them. They tell me what to do; they take me on a wild and wonderful trip."**

*Jackie Collins*

# Guilty of GILTI? A New Tax for Some Expats



Are you guilty of GILTI? You better hope not! GILTI stands for "Global Intangible Low Taxed Income" and was enacted as part of the US 2017 Tax Reform. Under GILTI, US expats who own and operate businesses through foreign corporations could be forced to pay US tax on their foreign corporation's profits, regardless of whether or not they receive a dividend!

You see, up until Tax Reform, US expats who owned and operated businesses through foreign corporations generally wouldn't pay any US tax on their foreign corporation's income until it paid them a dividend. Under the new law, however, if the foreign corporation has GILTI income, its US shareholder will be forced to pay US tax on it, regardless of whether they actually receive a dividend. This means they may have to pay US tax on money they don't actually receive.

So, what exactly is GILTI? GILTI is basically any income not from tangible assets (i.e. real estate or equipment); this means income from services, restaurants, and retail shops is GILTI income. Unfortunately, many US expats operate businesses that generate such income through foreign corporations and will get hit with GILTI tax.

## How much is the GILTI tax? Up to 37%!

How do you know if you are guilty of GILTI? First, you have to determine if your foreign corporation is a CFC. If not, no GILTI. If yes, determine if it has GILTI income. If not, no GILTI. If yes, guilty of GILTI!

A CFC is a foreign corporation that is more than 50% owned by **US shareholders**. A **US shareholder**, for CFC purposes, is **a US person** (US individual, corporation, partnership, etc...) **who owns 10% or more of the foreign corporation**. Simply stated, in calculating the US ownership percentage, only count the percentage owned by US persons who own at least 10%. If US shareholders own more than 50%, you have a CFC.

If you have a CFC, and it has GILTI income, you will be required to pay US tax on your pro rata share of its GILTI income, regardless of whether you actually received a dividend. There are, of course, some planning techniques.

Esquire Group will be offering a webinar on GILTI in the near future. For a full list of our upcoming webinars and to register for them, please visit <https://esquiregroup.com/events/events/>

*Jimmy Sexton, LL.M., is an expert in the field of international taxation, with an emphasis on expat issues. He has presented to American expats at groups that include American women's clubs throughout Europe and is a sought-after expert for several news organizations, including CNN and the Washington Post. He is the President of Esquire Group, an international tax preparation firm and Premier Sponsor of Inspiring Women Magazine.*



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## Colombia: Creating a Cookbook that Tells a Story



### JENNIE LEVITT

**American Women's Club of Bogotá, Colombia**  
**From: Phoenix, Arizona**  
**Lives: Bogotá, Colombia**

For the last ten years or so, I have been working in the food industry as a chef and food entrepreneur. Applying the foundations of Mediterranean cuisine to local ingredients and food culture, I founded a boutique catering company that curated events in cities as far ranging as Aspen and Rio de Janeiro.

Hundreds of dinner parties and hillside weddings later, I decided to attend business school at HEC Paris. In between Corporate Finance classes, my friend Shaheen Peerbhai and I started a pop-up lunch series that would one day become the basis for *Paris Picnic Club*, the cookbook that I co-wrote and illustrated with her. We have been writing the book for the last three years while

living on opposite ends of the globe; she is in London and I am in Bogotá. We Skyped daily and would both write and edit with Google Docs, making the creative process very dynamic. Since I so often rely on images and other creative outlets to express myself, becoming a woman of words has been a very interesting and rewarding process.

I am now living in Bogotá, Colombia where I teach cooking classes from my kitchen studio and am in the midst of launching a line of all-natural sparkling juices ( <https://corelia.co/>)

My husband, Luis, and I just had a baby and are adjusting to life as new parents as my other babies, the book and the juices, came into the world at the same time!

Since I have been so focused on food and art, I really only considered myself a writer very recently when I began working on the cookbook. Because the book is illustrated and does not rely on photographs, we realized that we needed to be extremely descriptive in our instructions. We also wanted to transport the readers to our Paris, a multicultural culinary playground that inspired us to



start our Picnic Club, so each recipe has an anecdote that helps bring it to life and give it some context.

Being able to, in some ways, immortalize my culinary creations through writing has allowed me to move forward in my career as a chef. Through both cooking classes and recipe testing for the book, I've learned to put down in words what I had previously only been able to replicate by hand, in photograph or in painting.



I am always so surprised and delighted by people's reactions to the book and how they appreciate the time and effort we've taken to intertwine our story into the recipes. We had been working on the book so long and had seen the words so many times over that we had almost forgotten what a labour of love it is.

Like most things, and especially artwork, I've discovered that the most successful writing comes from authenticity. I think, in some ways, I had always hidden behind other forms of art and had avoided using words to express myself. Now I feel more comfortable in doing so and in embracing my own voice.



#### **GETTING TO KNOW JENNIE**

***Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.***

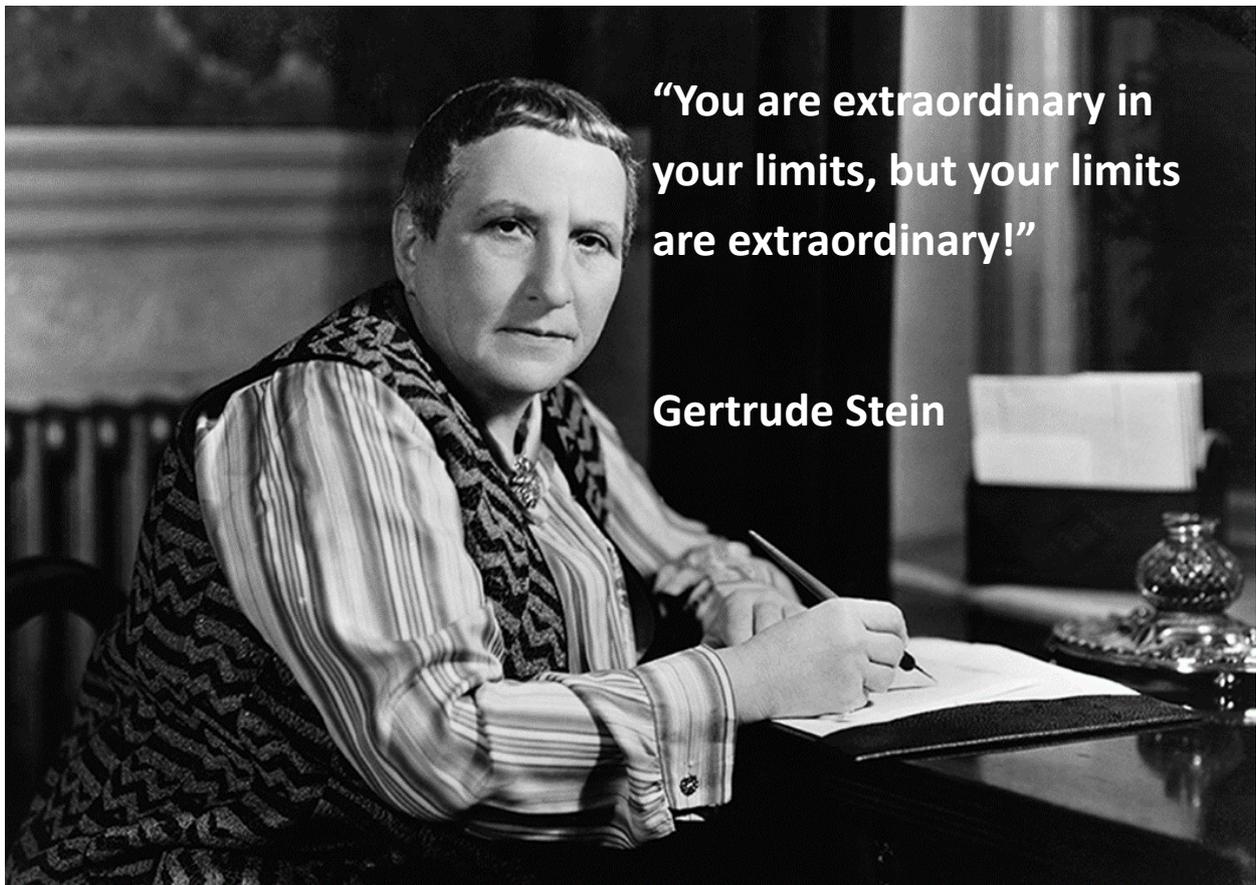
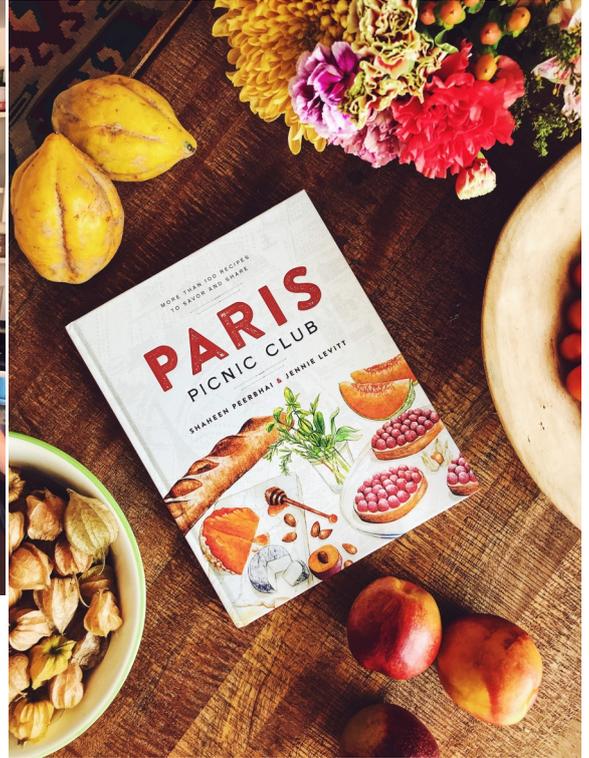
After college, I moved to rural Italy to work on a series of organic farms. It was there that I truly learned how to cook and to respect and accentuate the attributes of the beautiful, fresh produce that surrounded me. It also had an incredible impact on me personally, as I felt so removed from the material world and realized that decent wine, good food and great company are all you really need in life.

***If you could only save a copy of one book from the flames, what would it be and why?*** *To Kill A Mockingbird* - I read it when I was in fourth grade and I distinctly remember discussing it, and its ethical implications, with my Dad.

Not many books hold such a special place in my memory.

**What is your favorite word and why?** My favorite word is actually in Portuguese: **saudade**. It doesn't translate perfectly into English but it roughly means a deep longing for something lost or left behind. I learned it while living in Rio and still experience it as I think of that city and how much I love, and miss, it.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** I think the most difficult book I've ever read is *The Sound and The Fury*. I definitely wouldn't want to be one of those characters but I'd love to sit down with William Faulkner and ask him with which one he empathized most.



**“You are extraordinary in your limits, but your limits are extraordinary!”**

**Gertrude Stein**

# If you could be a character from a book or play who would you choose?



I would be Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*. I would love leading a life full of reading in the parlor, penning long letters, listening to live chamber music, riding sidesaddle on a horse, taking solitary walks around the luscious grounds of my estate and finally getting to kiss Colin Firth.

**SHELLEY KIRILENKO**

I'd love to relive Jack Kerouac's experience in *On the Road*. I think I've been obsessed with the laid-back charm of bohemian life (embellished with fresh flower arrangements and eclectic knick-knacks) ever since I read *On the Road* in high school.

**JENNIE LEVITT**

Anna Kerrigan, the protagonist in *Manhattan Beach*, Jennifer Egan's latest novel. Why? So many reasons: because she was an admirably tough woman in a tough period of time for women and because she spent so much time in New York City during one of the most fascinating periods of time in New York City. But most of all, because as Anna, I'd get to wear that old Mark V diving suit.



**DEBORAH STEINBORN**

Peter Pan! Unafraid to play and maybe even create some havoc - I want to do this more often! I've started attending laugh yoga workshops and will most likely take the training to become a laugh yoga instructor. The elements of laughter, fun, creativity and playfulness speak to my soul.

**CELESTE BROWN**



# Just for fun!

Natasha in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Natasha is so genuine and Tolstoy paints such a magical scene.

Imagine sledding through the snowy Russian countryside, exploring deer-filled forests and attending dances and the opera in all your finery. I'd erase the war part, but that would be cheating.

**VICTORIA KELLAWAY**



I would love to be Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennet! I love her strength of character: "There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me."

**SHEILA GRIFFITH**



I'm stumped. I can't imagine selecting only one. Surely I'd want to be all of Jane Austen's heroines who struggle to balance reason and passion, using, as guide, each carefully, lovingly observed detail in the lives of their family and friends.

**PAT FOGARTY**



I've been reading the *Magic Tree House* books with my youngest son and I might want to be Annie - she travels through time and around the world having adventures that spring out of the magical books she and her brother read in the tree house. What could be better?

**JENNIFER SAUNDERS**



I love stability and security way too much to take on the experience of any fictional characters. But, okay, Blanche DuBois maybe. You have to admire the way she created her world and lived in it to the fullest. Okay, she was crazy. Who isn't at least a little insane?

**CATHERINE PETERSSON**

# Germany: A Journalist's Worldwide Curiosity

## DEBORAH STEINBORN

*American Women's Club of Hamburg, Germany*  
**From: New York**  
**Lives: Hamburg, Germany**



I grew up in New York City, the third child in an immigrant family. My parents didn't like to talk much about their past, so I became curious about the rest of the world. I also always wanted to travel; we didn't do much of that as a family. As a teenager, I used to hang out in the reading room of the New York Public Library, exploring books. I guess I was a bit of a nerd.

After college, I went to Europe for an internship, then to graduate school part-time while working as an editor and reporter in NYC. I travelled a lot for work, first through the US, then in Asia and, lastly, in Europe, where the company I was working for (Dow Jones) relocated me. I met my husband while on a business trip to London. I have moved back and forth between Europe and the US a lot since then.

As soon as I could read, I read a lot. I loved books about faraway places and unusual people. And I read the local newspaper whenever I found one lying around. The stories were so interesting, the photos amazing.

Starting in grammar school, I had penpals, including my best friend from kindergarten - funnily enough, she only lived about a mile away. In fourth grade, I started a class newsletter; in high school, I was editor of the yearbook and worked on the school paper. The habit just stuck.

I went to Binghamton University, in upstate New York, for undergraduate studies. A professor there encouraged me to read foreign authors like Ayn Rand (he was a bit of a radical prof!), Dostoyevsky and even Christa Wolf. I did, and it was then that I knew that I wanted to go abroad for a while. So after college, I got an internship at the Deutsche Welle in Cologne, Germany, and got into journalism there. A reporter from Wyoming named Erin Condit, who worked there, really encouraged me to become a journalist and gave me the courage to do so. I would say, though, that it's an achievement that anyone can still make a living as a journalist in today's times, honestly! Not much value is placed on writing anymore.

I have been working as a journalist for well over 20 years. Now that I have lived in Germany for so long (I've moved here a total of three times in my life!), I can also write in German, so I work as a freelance journalist for both English and German-language publications. I have edited several books and ghostwritten one as well. I also wrote a book in German about women in the economy. That was an incredible challenge. A lot of words...



I met my husband through my writing career and also many friends. People I have interviewed for articles have become good friends and that is the case right up to today. Just last week, for instance, for an article I am writing, I interviewed an amazing woman in London named Kathryn Parsons who started her own company to teach people from all walks of life how to code. We totally hit it off and hope to bring some events to Germany together soon. Being a writer is a great excuse to meet all sorts of people and explore so many things you would never learn about otherwise.

Words are incredibly powerful. They should be chosen carefully, and oftentimes are not. That's probably the most important thing I am often reminded of in all aspects of life, from simple stuff like the things my children sometimes say to "big stuff" like the words politicians and other people in powerful positions choose.

If you are feeling inspired, I suggest you get out and talk to people, find great stories, and write them – in whatever form you feel most comfortable! It doesn't have to be journalism or even fiction. One of my best friends is a songwriter; she really writes about people she meets and experiences she has on a daily basis. I read a book of poetry recently; it was just one-line poems that were more observations about what you encounter from the moment you wake up until when you go to sleep. It was brilliant.

●-----●

**GETTING TO KNOW DEBORAH**

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** Living in Cambodia almost 20 years ago. Having my first baby 12 years ago. Running the Hamburg Marathon two years ago. Taking a one-day computer coding class two weeks ago in London. All were truly life-changing experiences, and I look forward to more.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** You only live once. Make an impact!

**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** A two-line poem my oldest daughter wrote me when she was three.

**What is your favorite word and why?** Why? Because it's so prodding, and because you can ask it again and again and always get a different answer.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?**

Jennifer Egan: You have such a fascinating life story. Why don't you write about yourself?



# The Hague: Mastering the Spoken Word



## CELESTE BROWN

***American Women's Club of The Hague,  
Netherlands***

**From: Cincinnati, Ohio**

**Lives: Oegstgeest, The Netherlands**

I feel as if my life is divided (so far) into four distinct parts:

Part I – The traditional years: Childhood, high school, university degrees in Cincinnati, Ohio; first job as a Special Education teacher, which evolved into creating the Work Experience Program for high school special education students. I grew up as an insecure child who didn't feel "heard." In my 20s, I started performing in musicals at local community theater groups and sang at weddings. I wasn't a wall flower, but my confidence wasn't great.

Part II – The transitional years: My life changed enormously when I was hired by Pfizer Labs as a Sales Representative. Benefiting from its excellent sales training courses and high-quality atmosphere, I worked in multiple positions in multiple locations. These learning and growth opportunities resulted in professional achievements, promotions and sales awards. In a nutshell, it broadened my life scope, and my speaking skills improved greatly during my Pfizer years. Yet I became particularly insecure about speaking off the cuff. Several embarrassing events are permanently engrained in my memory, including one very painful television interview. Ouch! I knew that I would never let this happen to me again.

Part III – My international years: A whole new world of possibilities opened for me when I moved to the Netherlands in 1998 to start a new life with my (then) new Dutch husband. I had a chance to create an entirely new life, and I knew that personal and professional development were my primary interests. AWC The Hague and FAWCO became parts of my life early on... and then came the world of "Toastmasters."

Part IV: In September 2018, I turn 65 and my husband retires – so who knows what is around the corner? It will undoubtedly include "the world of the spoken word." I'm looking forward to Part IV.





I knew that I wanted to become a more confident, polished speaker and presenter. Toastmasters was on my radar from when I lived in the US, but I had never taken the leap. When I was President of AWC The Hague (2002-2004), though, I realized that starting a Toastmasters club at AWC would benefit not only our professional members (and members who had left their careers behind) but also the community. (And in a self-serving moment, I hoped I could learn some new skills, too.) I set the wheels in motion to create Toastmasters of The Hague.

So much has happened since then. Today, after 15 years of Toastmastering, I can say, "Mission accomplished!" I've become a speaker, trainer, facilitator, speech coach, and can speak off the cuff

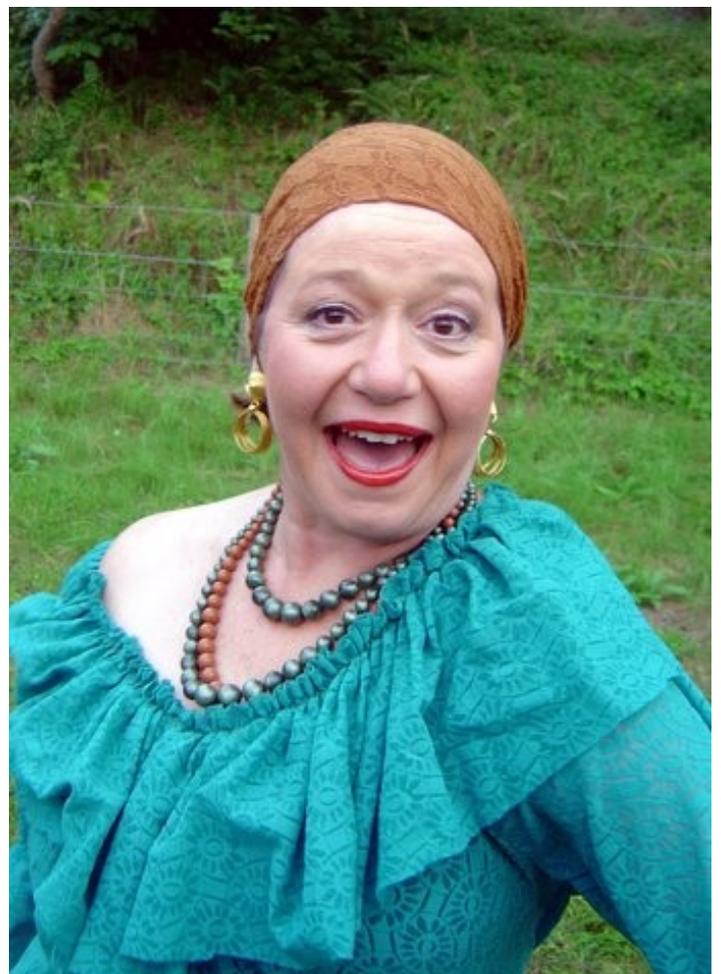
with much more ease... more than I'd ever anticipated.

My increased confidence has helped me navigate learning a new language in midlife. Learning Dutch has been a humbling experience, but it's important to speak, speak, speak, - and in the Netherlands, it's equally important to insist that the person you are talking to speaks back to you in Dutch, and not English.

The growth surge of Toastmasters across Europe in the last 15 years has surprised me tremendously. (When Toastmasters of The Hague was created, it was only the second club in The Netherlands. Today there are 40. Other European countries mirror this same growth pattern.) I wasn't aware that my own desires were identical to those of so many other people. I know better now. It may sound corny, but many people have their own unique reasons to want to become more confident speakers or presenters.

Many people believe that they should have a certain life goal before they wanting to become better speakers. "Oh, I don't need that in my life," or "I certainly don't want to become a professional speaker!" The real goal, though, is to be an effective speaker IN LIFE. It's about having the confidence to speak whenever and wherever you might want to.

Just about everyone is insecure about their speaking skills. Everyone can easily say what they don't do well and aren't aware of the innate talents that they use unconsciously. So I love telling speakers about what they do WELL. As a speech coach, these are the tidbits that people are hungry to hear. Is it "easy" for that person to write a speech with good structure and flow that the audience can follow? Is it "easy" for that person to have the confidence to stand in front of a group without shaking or nervous tics? Does the person have a natural stage presence that the audience is drawn to? People need to understand that the skills they have come to them naturally.



Through broader involvement in European Toastmasters, I've witnessed and facilitated its growth in the Netherlands and other countries. Much like FAWCO, sharing best practices is important to Toastmaster clubs' overall success. Many times throughout the years, I've been fortunate to be a trainer at officer trainings, an educational workshop presenter and Master of Ceremonies at conferences. I also create and facilitate board training and team building workshops for new boards of non-profit organizations. Organizational effectiveness and efficiency is a core interest for me.

The pinnacle of Toastmaster success is to be recognized as a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM), an honor that I received from Toastmasters International in 2012.



### GETTING TO KNOW CELESTE

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.**

I was fortunate to go to Jordan in April this year for a site visit to the current FAWCO Target Project recipient, the Collateral Repair Project. The visit was humbling and inspirational as we learned about CRP's programming and met some of the refugees they serve. Hope Workshop is the name of the handicraft group where women make and sell handmade items. Several women had been asked to design and create quilt squares that would reflect their personal stories, and the squares would eventually be assembled into a full quilt. Our visiting FAWCO group had the pleasure to witness the quilt unveiling, and more importantly, to see the ladies' joyful reactions. There was lots of chatter, smiles, laughter and rapid-fire Arabic filled the room. Several of the ladies told us (through interpreters) about what the quilt-making process meant to them.

Sometimes you don't need to know a language to understand what is being said. Even without the interpreters, their non-verbal

communication (vocal tone, inflection, expressions and movements) spoke volumes. It was clear that the experience had been deeply meaningful.

I was most impressed by two ladies in particular. The ladies were different from one another (one dressed traditionally, the other's attire was Western) yet both spoke with passion and enthusiasm. When they were finished, I went to them one by one to tell them how well they had spoken and how "powerful" they were. Their faces beamed and their eyes glowed with pride. My guess is that these lovely ladies, both refugees living in difficult circumstances in a foreign country, had never thought of themselves as "powerful," since as refugees, they may more inclined to feel "powerless."

It was a moment I'll never forget because it reinforced how important it is to tell someone



when they have TMI'd you (touched, moved and inspired). Words can have the power to change someone's life.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** "You must do the things you think you cannot do."

Eleanor Roosevelt

Everyone has fears, yet I believe that everyone has undiscovered and underdeveloped potential and talent. It's up to each of us to become the best version of ourselves possible. If someone says, "Oh, I can't do that!", I'm inclined to probe and ask "Why not?" People have the ability to do so much more than they think/admit they can. Sometimes a push out of their comfort zone is the best thing.

**If you could only save a copy of one book from the flames, what would it be and why?** A

book that resonated deeply with me is *Option B (Facing Adversity, Building Resilience and Finding Joy)* by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant. If you've been through a major life



difficulty (serious illness, death of a loved one, etc.), the book is chock full of stories, tips and suggestions on how to begin to move forward again. It's human to struggle during and after a serious life event, and as a two-time cancer survivor, I'm living proof that outside resources can be valuable tools to recover our mojo.

**What is your favorite word and why?** Imagine. I still get goose bumps when I hear John Lennon's immortal song "Imagine." I love the power of possibilities.

**"Women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems."**

*Virginia Woolf*



# A Club Inspires: AWC The Philippines

There are FAWCO clubs of all sizes and shapes across the world. *A Club Inspires* is a feature where you will learn more about one of them. This time we are pleased to share with you one of the FAWCO clubs based in Region 11: American Women's Club of the Philippines. Over to their president, Holly Reines...

When Ann Murphy, wife of the American Ambassador, arrived in Manila in mid-1978, she was surprised to find no club solely for American women, regardless of affiliation. She, together with other enthusiastic, talented and hard-working women, organized and brought into being the American Women's Club of the Philippines (AWCP). Their first meeting was held in early 1979 and on April 23, at the Makati Sports Club, the constitution was adopted and officers elected.

Since its inception, the basic organization of the AWCP has not changed, although it has been enriched and expanded through the efforts of its diverse membership. The original goals of assisting newcomers and offering a meeting place for American women are still part of our mission, but the club also supports the local population through its community service projects.

Through the years, American women and wives of American citizens continue to establish new friendships as they work together to make AWCP stronger. Each year, new activities are added and involvement in the Filipino community increases. We are indeed fortunate to be part of such a vibrant, alive and productive organization.

Our current membership stands at 150. We are composed of American and multinational expats. As of 2018 we have opened our membership to Filipino citizens as well. Our members share the common goals of assisting our host country through community service, charitable donations and a desire to create a hospitable and welcoming group to help new arrivals assimilate to a new country.



Our club President appoints/organizes a nominating committee each September, which secures nominations for each elected office by November. Our elections are held each December. Recently our situation has been such that we only have one nominee per position, so most offices are elected by proclamation and approval as opposed to voting between multiple candidates. We have seven elected Board positions; our supporting board members are all committee chair positions who execute all other club activities, such as tours, welcoming, hospitality and children's parties.

All of our events are organized by volunteers from our board and membership. We do have one paid employee who assists the board with any needs.

Our organization hosts monthly coffee mornings for the purpose of welcoming new arrivals with the opportunity to meet with longer-residing members. We host quarterly General Meetings, which are usually over lunch, have a guest speaker and are an opportunity to present new club business.

We host the following events on a monthly basis: Lunch Bunch meet-ups at new restaurants around the city; Wine Wisdom evenings where we meet with spouses for a social evening and the hosts determine the wine theme for the night; Book Club and tours around the city and surrounding countryside. We also have mah-jong groups, community collection drives and children's parties for all the major holidays.



Our most famous and recognized event in the city is a monthly shopping bazaar that we have been hosting for the past 20+ years. We host between 200 and 300 vendors monthly for a day of shopping and supporting local businesses. Many are family-run, established businesses that have participated with us for more than a decade. We are also a launch point for many start-up businesses that opened their first stalls with us to build their clientele and then became nationally recognized chains! This is a non-profit event for us and funds our community outreach capabilities. The money earned from this event goes back to the Filipino community -



for example, funding building classrooms, a water well, student tuitions, a prep kitchen for a livelihood project, books for libraries and so much more! We have many people who plan their trips to Manila around the bazaar date each month! It is 100% volunteer-run and organized by our members.

Our evening with the US Ambassador, Sung Y. Kim, is a favorite event of the year. Annually, the Ambassador opens his home to us for an evening of socializing with our fellow members and

representatives from the diplomatic community. This is one of our most popular members-only events every year. The evening is a casual night in a formal setting and makes all members feel prouder of and connected to our representation in the Philippines.



We also host an annual October Halloween Charity Party fundraiser. For this event, we select one specific charity for all proceeds to benefit. Last year we were able to donate over 1 million pesos to the Kalipay Negrense Foundation to build a new classroom for their youngest residents ([www.kalipaynegrensefoundation.org](http://www.kalipaynegrensefoundation.org)). For the 2018 event, our beneficiary will be the Philippine Cerebral Palsy Inc. organization.

The party takes months of preparation, but the end result is a fabulous evening of 250 attendees, all in unique costumes, enjoying an evening where the entire goal is to raise money for charity. Our membership and the community at large attend in support of a great cause and enjoy themselves immensely!

This is a country with so much need that we do our best to support established charities with proven records of using funds for their stated intended purpose.

But what can we tell you about the country in general? Well, the Philippines is a dynamic host country. Many ladies arrive and acclimate immediately to the bevy of “perks” that come with living here: a tropical climate all year round, domestic helpers, drivers, gardeners, cooks, etc. The lifestyle many expats lead here is what many people read about in magazines, and ladies are easily pacified by this to overlook the perceived drawbacks of life in the Philippines. However, once you scratch the surface of living here, you find incredible traffic congestion, immense poverty and political challenges. Expats soon find ways to share their bounty through charities and community outreach. The opportunities are endless, and AWCP works hard to

support many charities throughout the country, not just in Metro Manila.



Most expats in the Philippines enjoy our location for easy travel to the plethora of island getaways throughout the country, within easy driving or flight distance. We are also within easy flying distance to Hong Kong, Vietnam, Bali, Singapore, Bangkok, Taiwan, China (the list is endless). So it is a

paradise for those who have the time to travel the region.

For expats, condo/apartment living has grown in the popularity recently, as housing rentals are extremely high-priced and most companies are no longer giving housing allotments to match. There are a few popular neighborhood hubs for expats within the city, and they host all the amenities of life that one expects in their home country. The Philippines embraces Western culture. So furniture, groceries, gyms and movie theaters are now all being built to First-World standards.



The Philippines offers some of the most remarkable ocean diving opportunities in the world at the Tubbataha Reef. The Philippines is home to six UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the most famous being the Ifugao Rice Terraces, the Tubbataha Reef and the Puerto Princesa Underground River.

Within Metro Manila, many people visit the Malacañang Palace, which is the official residence of the president; Intramuros, which is the original walled city of Manila; and the many markets and shopping areas we have, which include fresh fish markets, homeware and clothing stall markets and the constantly growing list of shopping malls.

As hosts, Filipinos are extremely friendly and gracious to most expats living here. They are a very Westernized culture compared to many others in South East Asia. The English fluency rate here is

quite high, allowing expats to communicate in English rather than requiring foreigners to learn Tagalog to survive.



The Philippines is famous for celebrating the longest Christmas season in the world. Christmas is synonymous with the “ber” months so starting literally September 1, Christmas decorations go up and the radio stations start playing Christmas music. The decor does not

come down until it's time to decorate for Valentine's Day.

The Philippines is also famous for supplying the world with OFW (Overseas Foreign Workers). Workers ranging from nursing staff to domestic help to construction workers to seamen around the world are from the Philippines. 10% of the Filipino population works overseas.



Famous foods from the Philippines include lumpia, adobo, mangos, pancit, and halo-halo. Many foreigners are dared to eat balut, which is a fermented duck embryo still in the egg. These are all very common foods in Filipino culture.

We have a fantastically welcoming group of ladies in our organization. I personally have been a member of many women's clubs around the world and have never experienced such a warm embrace as a new member to a club. Next year AWCP will celebrate our 40th year, and we are very excited. Maybe come visit us?

*Holly Reines, AWCP President*

Want to be sure you see the next issue of **Inspiring Women** as soon as it comes out? Click [here](#) to have it sent directly to your mailbox! Or scan the QR code.



# Toulouse: An Activist's Writing Against Injustice

## JEN SCHRADIE

**Women's International Network in Toulouse, France**

**From: Toledo, Ohio**

**Lives: Toulouse, France**



After I graduated from Duke University, I was a community and labor organizer in rural eastern North Carolina, part of the Black Belt South. Through this work, I became interested in documenting the social movements of marginalized people, so I began to make films about their struggles. Over the next decade, I honed my craft in making documentary films of people telling their own stories of survival against corporate power. Most of my films focused on the southern US, except for my last film, called *The Golf War: A story of land, golf and revolution in the*

*Philippines*. My films have screened on PBS and at more than 25 film festivals and 100 universities. I also began to do freelance writing (as well as becoming an Ashtanga yoga teacher!). After my last film tour, I realized that I was particularly interested in how oppressed people and their labor, political and social movements were being represented in the media, so I decided to go to graduate school to study this topic. After a master's program at Harvard's Kennedy School, I began a PhD program at the University of California, Berkeley, where I received my degree in both Sociology and New Media. I then moved to France for a research fellow position at the Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse.

I won a writing award in elementary school for writing a fictional account of Abraham Lincoln's conflicted role in the freeing of the slaves. This emboldened me. I continued to write – including for my high school newspaper, inspired by my English teacher who told us that we couldn't believe everything we read in the newspaper. I wanted to write the untold stories that weren't necessarily making it into the mainstream, and when I was a community/labor organizer, I edited a newsletter about



local struggles. In many ways, being a filmmaker was a way to do that as well.

Another experience that inspired my passion for words was when I spent time in Central America in the late 1980s, when the US government was waging an illegal war against local people fighting for democracy and land reform. I witnessed the atrocities, and many people encouraged me to tell the story of what I had seen, which I did both in print and in speech upon returning to the US.

As an academic, I not only write sociological journal articles, but I also enjoy blogging to get esoteric ideas out to regular people. I have also been interviewed by over 50 mainstream media outlets about my research on social media inequalities – often called the digital divide. People assume that the social media era allows anyone to be a writer in the digital public sphere, but social class and other inequalities have often deepened rather than ameliorated divisions in society. Soon, I am also coming out with a book from Harvard University Press on this topic of a Digital Activist Gap. The working title is *The Myth of Online Activism and the Work of Democracy*.



On the one hand, my field of study – and writing – is about how some people's voices are not heard in the digital public sphere. On the other hand, through digital technology, my voice has been amplified – whether through blogging, tweeting, filmmaking or writing academic articles. I have privilege – by being white and having a PhD – so I need to be mindful that I am not pretending to speak for marginalized people but to support their own voices being heard. The big challenge is to write for both an academic and a public audience. But I think this type of writing is essential: there is so much amazing research being conducted, but it is rarely translated (or translated well) to the general public. Academic writing norms are overly complex and verbose. I was even criticized once in a review for having paragraphs that were too short! I was worried that when I started in academia that my writing would deteriorate. In some ways it has, but I have gotten it back by writing the book – and by blogging.

I have discovered what many have already learned through trial and error: less is more!



Simplicity is key. Storytelling is paramount. And sensationalism is short lived.

I've also learned that my insecurities and fears about life in general come out in my writing. In academia in particular, we are constantly being critiqued for our ideas – expressed through writing – and we have to make sure to consider an entire field of study when we write. So I often have multiple points of view to consider, not just one audience, and this can often constrain and slow down my writing. But I have

found that when I am conscious of this inhibition, that my writing drastically improves and is much clearer (and faster!).

I think that my three most important achievements to date are: 1. Getting a book contract with Harvard University Press; 2. Viral blog post, "An open letter to Mark Zuckerberg;" 3. Creating a viral tweet storm on my phone after frustration with news coverage of an anti-fascist protest.

### GETTING TO KNOW JEN

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.**

I had the opportunity to pitch my documentary film, *The Golf War*, to Michael Moore during a Q&A after the screening of one of his films. He had always been an inspiration to me – speaking truth to power with humor. On the spot, he committed to give me \$1000 for my film, which at the time was significant to help raise more money, as well as bolstering my confidence in my storytelling, and in unorthodox filming. I told him how I snuck into a golf course to film Tiger Woods while he was in the Philippines promoting golf in the country – while nearby, his sponsors were funding a golf and tourist resort that was kicking farmers off their land and killing those who non-violently protested.



**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** Be true to yourself. This is bolstered by my yoga practice and always makes my writing better.

**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** The longest book ever written. If I only had one book left to read, I'd want to make it last. When I was in the Philippines living with rebel guerrillas, I could only bring one book with me and savoured it by rationing it every day.

**What is your favorite word and why?** Parsimonious – oh, the irony of a word that is supposed to describe simplicity in creating categories, but is actually a complicated word – it sums up all that is wrong with academic writing (yet I use it myself at times.)

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** Charlotte Perkins Gilman – her short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," had a profound effect on me – how she told the personally inspired story of patriarchy and oppression. She was also influenced by her great aunt Harriet Beecher Stowe, so I'd be curious to ask her how other women writers influenced her.



# Italy: Legally Addicted to Words

## DEIRDRE PIRRO

*The American International League of Florence,  
Italy*

**From: Melbourne, Australia**

**Lives: Florence, Italy**



I studied both law and history at the University of Melbourne where, after graduation, I became an Associate Law Professor. On settling in Italy, I thought I would be unemployable, the classic "square peg in a round hole" as I was a lawyer trained in the common law tradition looking for work in a country where civil law is practiced.

However, to my surprise I soon found work with the Italian Supreme Court preparing case law abstracts for its data bank on environmental law and for the Italian National Research Council (CNR) as a legal editor and translator. Since 1988, I have also been the International Relations Officer for an United Nations-accredited NGO called ICEF (International Court of the Environment Foundation) in Rome. Its objective, as its name suggests, is to create a world environmental court. Through my work with ICEF, I became a founding judge of the International Court of Environmental Arbitration and Conciliation with chambers in Mexico City and San Sebastian in Spain and I am the delegate, for the International Alliance of Women, at the Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

Since school, I have always been involved in words and writing but in my professional life it was with "academic" writing, using always the passive voice, particularly in legal briefs. By chance, in 2006, I met Nita Tucker, the editor of *The Florentine*, the new English-language paper in Florence who asked me if I would be interested in writing for it. So, I had to learn and acquire an active voice in my writing and give it a journalistic zing. And so, twelve years later, I still write a monthly column for the paper on famous Italians or expats or on the many monuments dotted about the city.

As well as my column in the paper, I am working on another book project which is a biography.



I also coordinate a writers' group called Florence Story which meets twice a month to review each other's work and discuss our mutual problems as writers and, above all, to encourage and help each other.

The world of 'words' has opened my life to new experiences and to frequently meeting new and interesting people from all walks of life. It has broadened my horizon enormously. I never quite know where it will lead me next. I am constantly on the look out for the next story, the next life to delve into, whether a person or a place because places also have their biographies. Combined with this the extra surprise and added bonus is when people tell me or write to me saying how much they enjoy what I write!

The most important thing I have discovered about 'words' since I began to explore this new world of biography and life writing is that they are addictive – terribly addictive. I actually LOVE words and never get tired of or bored with writing. I have to get my daily 'fix' or else the day somehow seems empty. When you are well and truly 'hooked', words can also be unbelievably frustrating causing sleepless nights and anguished days as you keep searching for exactly the 'right' word. One thing is certain, they never bore you.

Since I began writing non-fiction biography, I have published three books. The first, *Italian Sketches. The Faces of Modern Italy* looks at the who and whys of a nation whose modern cultural landscape remains largely undiscovered by examining the lives of 40 of its most influential modern *personaggi* (characters) from the fields of ideas and industry, show and business, politics and power, morality and corruption, words and music and fashion and style. The second is called

*Famous Expats in Italy* which probes the lives of a number of wealthy, noble and illustrious expatriates as well as disputable foreign rogues and fugitives from the law. Both these books were published by The Florentine Press and are available through amazon.com. The third, entitled *Politica e Prosa*, written together with Truby Chiaviello, is an anthology consisting of excerpts of speeches and novels from English into Italian, published by PRIMO Magazine. I am delighted to say that they continue to sell well.



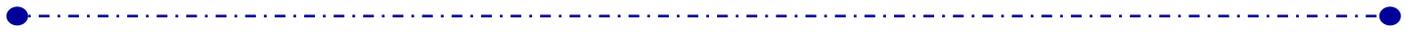
## GETTING TO KNOW DEIRDRE

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** On completing my degrees, I became an Associate Law Professor but, after teaching for a short time, I decided to close the books for a while and take a round-the-world cruise. Sailing from my home town on a liner heading for Italy one beautiful January morning, I was not to know I would never use my return ticket. Instead, I met and very soon after married the ship's Italian captain and settled in Florence, where I now live and work.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** - Always follow your dreams. In trying to do this, I am sometimes forced to make decisions that can be difficult and painful but right in the end or other times it makes me marvel why I hadn't done certain things long before I actually did,

**If you could only save a copy of one book/ If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** - A modern English version of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* because his pilgrims, each in their own particular way and in their own words, lay bare their strengths and frailties which are, of course, the same as most of us.

**What is your favorite word and why?** - "Today", because I can tend to put things off firmly believing there will always be a "tomorrow" which is just not so.



**"The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me."**

***Ayn Rand***



# Home and Away: The Finish Line



**Home and Away columnist Robin Meloy Goldsby considers her writing career.**

During my NYC years I used to watch, each autumn, as marathon runners dashed, shuffled, and sauntered across the Queensboro Bridge. The participants in the New York City Marathon - homo-nautilus super-humans wearing neon tights and puffy shoes - seemed like visitors from a distant planet. The idea that anyone could muster enough discipline to run twenty-six miles in a few hours inspired me. *Someday, I would think, someday I will do that, too.*

I'm a lousy runner. I'm also a bit top heavy. The last time I tried to jog, I tripped over one rock and landed - chest-first - on more rocks. I sprained my thumb and broke a rib. Good thing I was wearing two bras.

For much of my adult life, the marathon dream nagged me. I longed for a long-term project, a race I could run without tripping, a finish line I might cross with my rib cage intact. About twelve years ago I discovered writing. Not journals, song lyrics, or blog posts - I had done that - but books. I thought I had it in me to write one. And that's how my writing career started - with a scalding desire to accomplish a long-term goal. I wanted to prove I *could* cross a finish line.

I'm also a pianist. Most musicians cross little finish lines every time they play. Writing a book seemed more like the musical equivalent of composing and performing a concerto - a complete work that would make sense of the fragmented ideas banging around in my brain and organize them into a literary score. I wanted to orchestrate my thoughts with words.

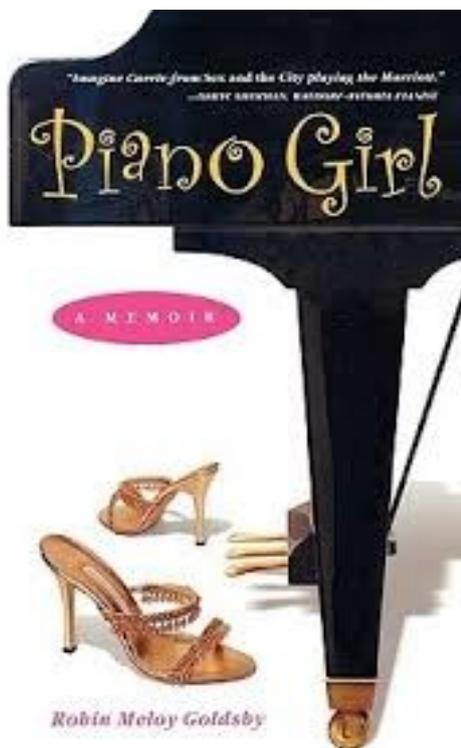
But where to start? It's hard to cross a finish line if you don't know where the race begins.

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Want to hear a couple of funny stories? Grab a beer, a bowl of stale almonds, and hang out with the local band on a break between sets. My dad, a versatile Pittsburgh drummer, kept our family entertained with stories about drunks, divas and exotic dancers. As a child, I listened to his pitch-perfect tales and dreamed that someday I'd have my own stories to tell. To earn that privilege, I had to master the piano, go on the road, memorize thousands of songs, and navigate an obstacle course full of artistic booby-traps.

The idea for *Piano Girl: A Memoir*, came to me after thirty years of solo piano gigs in smoky





cocktail lounges, roadside dives, plush Manhattan hotels, and European castles. This was a book I could write, a race I could finish. I had played three decades worth of background music, entertaining myself by observing the human comedies, tragedies and mundane miracles drifting past the Steinway. I was ready to start whisking my real-life stories into a readable froth.

When Backbeat Books surprised me with a contract, an advance, and a six-month deadline to complete my manuscript, I committed to a full-time writing schedule. I learned to love words as much as I love music. I discovered that writing a book really is a marathon – a glorious haul to a finish line that sometimes looks more like a brick wall than of a flimsy piece of plastic tape.

*Piano Girl* received a *Publishers Weekly* starred review and landed feature interviews for me on *All Things Considered*, *The Leonard Lopate Show*, and NPR's *Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*. Henry Steinway sponsored a *Piano Girl* reading and concert at Steinway Hall.

The publisher organized a book launch cocktail party at the Waldorf Astoria. NPR taped the event - attended by industry professionals and booksellers from all over the country. I wore an over-the-top red evening gown, played "Night and Day" on Cole Porter's piano, and read from my book. Sipping champagne, I checked out the stylish crowd flitting around the Art Deco Waldorf lobby, stunned that my childhood fantasy of having people listen to my stories had evolved into a book that people liked.

In a way, sitting at the piano that night, I felt like I had crossed my finish line. The excitement had kept me awake for three days, and I wanted to collapse into a heap, but I couldn't - I had to play the gig. My fingers found the opening chords to "Misty" just as I noticed a man in a banana costume strutting across the Waldorf lobby. Wow, I thought - *I can use that in a new story.*

The truth hit me like a ton of books: For a writer, the finish line is a mirage. A thought becomes a word becomes a sentence becomes a phrase and a paragraph and a story and a book. You believe you've crossed the finish line, and you're ready to collect a medal and a gift certificate for a free massage. Then you see a man dressed as a banana, forget the race you've just won, and start the next project.



The wonderful author, Jane Smiley, said: "I believe that you either love the work or the rewards. Life is a lot easier if you love the work."

The *Piano Girl* media hoopla stoked my ego, but I soon realized the temporary highs couldn't compete with the thrill of writing - the subtle bliss that comes with uncovering the musical threads connecting the chapters of my life. My personal triumphs come from stumbling upon a perfect word, tapping out the rhythm of my sentences, and, on a good day, arranging the

weird themes of my life into beautiful or ugly melodies.

Since that fateful *Piano Girl* launch, I have written four books.

You know those cheerleaders who stand on the sidelines and hand out energy bars and water to runners as they approach the end of a marathon? My readers are those people - carrying me over the finish line and giving me the confidence to start another race.

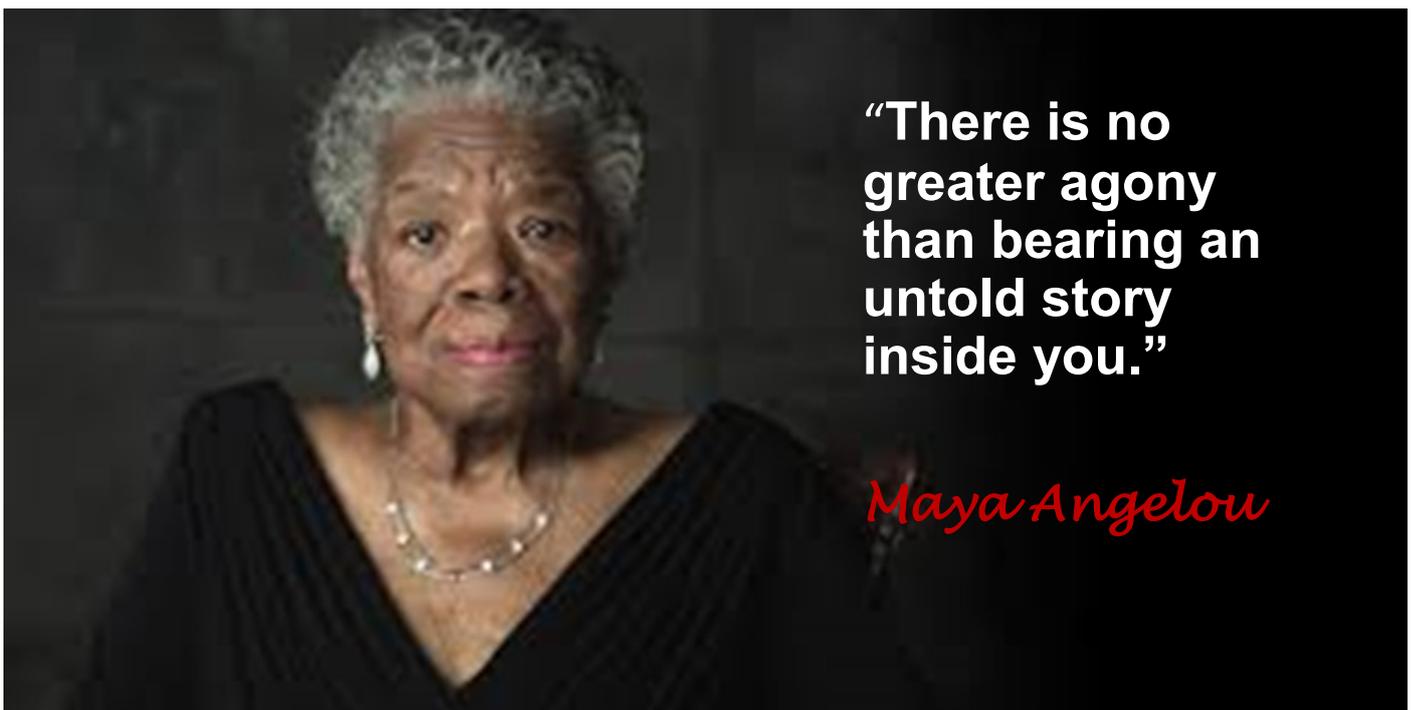
“Watch out for the rocks!”, someone might shout.

I'm beyond grateful.



**Robin Meloy Goldsby's solo piano career has taken her from Pittsburgh to posh New York City venues and exclusive resorts, and on to the European castles and concert stages where she now performs. Robin, a Steinway Artist, has seven recordings to her name and has appeared in the USA on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and *Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*. She is the author of *Piano Girl*, *Rhythm*, *Waltz of the Asparagus People*, and *Manhattan Road Trip*.**

**Currently, Robin is the featured pianist at the Excelsior Hotel Ernst in Cologne, Germany. Her latest recording, *Home and Away*, launched on November 26th, 2017. You can visit Robin's web page at [www.goldsby.de](http://www.goldsby.de).**



**“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”**

*Maya Angelou*

# Bogotá: A Writer's Advice – Complete the Book



## VICTORIA KELLAWAY

**American Women's Club of Bogotá, Colombia**

**From: Kent, England**

**Lives: Bogotá, Colombia**

I became a newspaper reporter at the age of twenty-one. Most of my work involved despair. I was the journalist who appeared in the aftermath of horror, be it a single death or thousands, asking those involved to share their suffering. I believe that work is important, it gives people a voice and it holds others accountable, but it did take its toll. At twenty-seven I was ready to escape and I chose the Galapagos Islands. It was the most remote, fascinating place I could imagine and an inspired decision. Three months

later, I was refreshed and keen to explore more of South America. I arrived in Bogotá, Colombia, and found it irresistible. I decided to stay a while to study Spanish, dance salsa and figure out what I wanted to do with my life. A few months became a year, and a freelance writing career, and my first book was published four years later. I met my husband, Carlos, the year the book came out. Sometimes I don't know whether I chose Bogotá, or it chose me.

I was lucky enough to have a mother who read to me as a child and I still remember how proud I felt when my parents first let me choose a book to read alone. But my relationship with reading was not idyllic. A teacher confiscated one novel when I was ten, and my mother was called into the school to explain. "She must have taken it from the bookshelf," she said. "What are we supposed to do, tell a child not to read?" I developed some anti-social tendencies, and often had books confiscated so I would participate in family gatherings. And yet, I never understood the relationship between writers and books. The only job I could imagine that allowed a person

to write was newspaper reporting and that's why I chose it. It wasn't until I was nearly thirty that I realised I could write books too.

Since then I have co-written a satire on Colombian culture, called *Colombia a Comedy of Errors* and I have co-edited two essay collections, *Was Gabo an Irishman?* (Tales from Gabriel García Márquez's





Colombia) and *Alone Together (Tales of Sisterhood and Solitude in Latin America.)* Besides writing and lecturing, I participate in panels, interviews and signings. Writing and reading are solitary activities and I think it's important we writers play our part in inspiring others, helping them to discover new books and genres, maybe even start writing themselves.

I've learned to walk the line between protecting my treasured 'writing time' and accepting that life is a tough

beast to tame. Learning to say 'no' as a freelance writer is challenging, but I am improving. Every time I refuse to write something for someone else, I grab that time to write for myself and I'm now happier with the balance. I'm learning all the time too. I've noticed that my relationship with other people's books is evolving. Sometimes I find I'm studying books more than reading them (How did the author do *that*? How were we brought *here*?) and then every now and again a book will knock me sideways and I'll think, "Yep. That's why words matter."

Working with words is easier than many of us are taught to believe. Towering walls are built around the literary world, including the myth that writing is a difficult job, that you need to type through the night fuelled by cocaine and whiskey, leaving relationships in your wake as you surge towards a tragic end – a tragic end that was foretold since the day you emerged from your tragic childhood, which is the only reason anyone allows you to write in the first place. Can we set that one to rest please? There are difficult jobs out there and sitting in our pajamas, re-arranging sentences is not one of them. The knowledge that being a writer was something I could do, an ordinary human being, was the biggest surprise to me. If I can do it, so can you.

Authors are not deities. Readers will always have the final say and potentially, there are seven billion of them, with diverse experiences and attitudes to our writing. I've had readers remark, "Yours was the worst book I have ever purchased and I only made it to page two!" and another, on the same day, "I love your book. I've read it three times and bought copies for all my friends. How did you do it?" and I enjoyed meeting them both. Our writing will not touch everyone. It will not convince everyone and it will not be deemed worthwhile by everyone. And therein lies our freedom. Providing our work is as touching, convincing and worthwhile as we can make it; we are the only reader that matters. The rest are far too unpredictable.

I've been involved in writing and editing three books so far and they have had their share of success, from becoming bestsellers in various countries



to being stocked by entities such as the Nobel Peace Center and the Harvard Library. And yet my most important achievement in the literary world has been seeing each book completed. I say this to anyone considering being involved with a book, whether as a writer or an editor: "A book doesn't have to be good. But it does have to be finished." (There are exceptions, of course, but we're not all Kafka.) Just finish the thing. Dot the final 'i' and cross the final 't' and you'll have achieved the most important part.

If you want to become a writer start now. Not tomorrow, not next weekend. Now. You need a computer, or a pen and paper, or a pencil stub and the back of an old envelope. You don't need to write a book in one day. You just need to write something now, and something else tomorrow and keep writing, and editing, and re-writing. Read the best, study the craft, take a course either in person or online. Our world is open to everyone, you'll soon get sucked in, find a tribe and progress from there. But whatever you do, whatever you learn, whatever rejection you encounter, just keep writing. You cannot find your readers if you have nothing for them to read.

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### **GETTING TO KNOW VICTORIA**

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** I covered the Boxing Day tsunami in south-east Asia when I was twenty-two, reporting from refugee camps in the north of Sri Lanka where the aid wasn't getting through. I remain haunted by the people I met there and the stories I heard and witnessed. I'm sure it made me more empathetic, more easily moved and affected by other people's experiences. I swore I wouldn't cry there, and I didn't, but when a woman who had lost her only daughter hugged me and told me, "I can't believe you've travelled all the way around the world just to talk to people like us," my throat and lungs burned in a way they never have since.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** I like Martin Luther King's advice, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." It helps to remember that achievement is not always instant. Let's just do one thing today that will bring us closer tomorrow. Let's keep crawling.

**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** *A Woman in Berlin*, an anonymous diary kept by a journalist in her early thirties when the city of Berlin fell in 1945, and more than two million women were raped by incoming soldiers. The writer is funny, honest, smart, angry and thoughtful, and this is a vital



historical document. It's a brave, hopeful, life-affirming book and I'd save it so every woman has the chance to read it.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** Perhaps he wouldn't count as a writer as much as a character in his own biography, but Jesus Christ would be the most fascinating interview. The question I would ask is, "Jesus, your book is one of the biggest sellers of all time, it is one of the most debated and fought over books in human history. Do you have any regrets?"

## Bern: Navigating the Serious Side of Poetry



### JENNIFER SAUNDERS

***American Women's Club of Bern, Switzerland***  
**From: Glenco, Illinois but also Washington, DC**  
**Lives: Hindelbank (outside Bern), Switzerland**

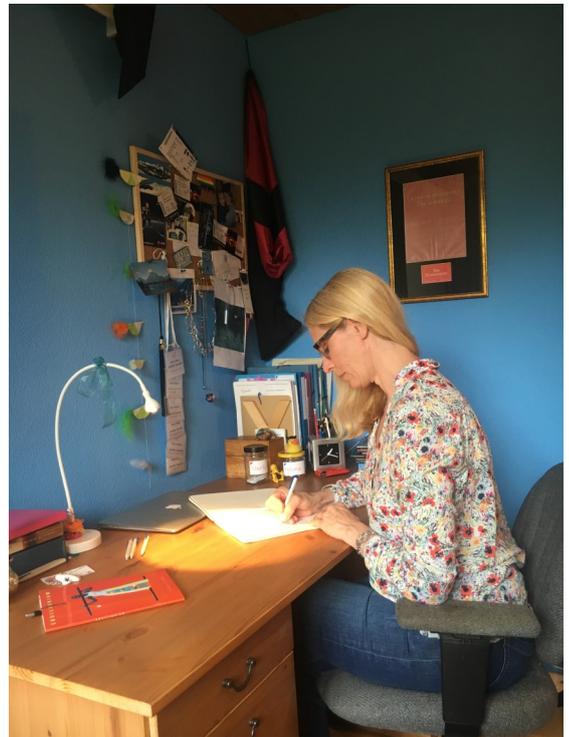
Thinking back over it, even my non-words life has been pretty wordy. After graduating from college I worked as a legal assistant in Washington, DC, where I also got my masters degree in political science. That's where I met my Swiss husband, who was studying at the same university. When we got married, he had a job lined up in Zürich and I had no job lined up, so we moved to Switzerland. I enrolled in German classes and taught English as a foreign language until my oldest son was born. The one non-wordy thing I do, and I'm so glad my husband convinced me to do this because I almost said no, is to teach skating at a hockey school in Bern. It's just two hours a week during hockey season, but those two hours when I'm outside of my head and engaging with the mechanics of my body are a real delight. I teach kids as young as 4 years old, and they watch and imitate everything I do on the ice. I don't have time, or frankly the desire, to get wrapped up inside my head when I'm skating and helping the kids learn to skate.

As for a lot of writers, I've been writing for as long as I can remember. In the first grade, we wrote our own stories and bound them into books with hard, cloth-covered covers and I was so proud of my very first book and that might have been when I decided to be a writer. I have boxes and boxes of journals that I lug from home to home with me. I've always been writing. I did somehow sort of get away from writing *poetry*, though, until my second son was born and I experienced profound, debilitating post-partum depression. I would take the baby on long walks over the cobble-stoned streets of the Old Town of Bern and the gentle rumbling would put him to sleep and then I'd roll the stroller into this coffee shop that had double-wide automatic doors with no stairs and a wide center aisle, and while he slept in the stroller I would drink tea and write. From that dark place I started writing poetry again, and I really think it saved my life during that time. I say that quite literally. Poetry and that coffee shop saved my life. The coffee shop is gone now, but I'm never leaving poetry again.

I read poetry and write every day, although my writing doesn't always come to a draft or something I would consider a poem. Sometimes I'm just noodling around or making word lists or taking notes on what the birds are doing outside my window. Sometimes I'm journaling. Sometimes I'm describing something I want to remember. Sometimes I write a poem that's really horrible and should never ever see the light of day, but as my teacher the poet Marvin Bell always tells his students, "The good stuff and the bad stuff are all part of the stuff. No good stuff without bad stuff." If I go a few days without opening my notebook, I start to get cranky – like those really committed runners who run every day and feel out of sorts when they can't. It's not

always meant to be a poem or to get published, but writing is how I make sense of the world and myself.

It took me a long time to allow myself to move my writing from the periphery of my life to the center. When I went back to graduate school to get my MFA in poetry from the low-residency program at Pacific University, I had about 20 or 25 hours of homework a week: reading 20 poetry collections a semester and writing critical reactions to them, writing my own poetry, revising earlier work, and writing detailed letters to my advisors discussing my work and my progress and responding to their letters to me. It couldn't be a hobby that I got around to when I found time anymore. I had to take my writing as seriously as it deserved to be taken – it did, after all, save my life – and giving myself the permission to take myself seriously and treat myself like a professional has been the biggest change in my writing over the past three years. It's a strange combination because poetry is an art and a passion and a way of living and in the end the writing is about the writing, the act of writing itself, about creating something; but it can also be a profession, or at least it has professional aspects to it. People publish and teach and compete for grants and residencies, and in that respect I treat myself like a professional and take my writing very seriously. In the end what I want is to write beautiful work but I'm not going to pretend I don't want that work to find an audience. Taking *that* side of poetry seriously has been a new world to navigate.



Words are imperfect, there's a lot of talk about how the word can never be the thing it represents, but words are all we have to reach across the space of unknowing between people. How else can we know each other? How else can I know what it's like for you to be you in this world and how else can I express what it's like for me to be me moving through this world but through this attempt at communication? Genuine communication is a form of risk. The best poetry takes that risk, it opens up worlds and helps bridge the distance between us. Honestly, taking that risk terrifies me most of the time but every day there I am at the page doing it anyway. Bridging the distance is worth risking the fall I guess.



I received my Masters of Fine Arts from Pacific University in January, 2017, and my first poetry chapbook, *Self-Portrait with Housewife*, has been accepted for publication by Tebot Bach Press (but I don't have a publication date for it yet).

So if you want to be a poet my advice is: Read. Read poetry. A lot of people think poetry is intimidating or not for them or up in the clouds – and I think this has a lot to do with how poetry is taught when we're young – but there are so many contemporary poets writing today that I think everybody can find poems that speak to them. I mean, there is an entire anthology of Canadian ice hockey poetry (yes, I own it, how could I not?) so there are definitely poems out there for everybody. The evolution of online literary journals – or online complements to print journals – has made reading

living poets easier than ever. The canon and the classics are great to have under your belt, but I would urge people to read living poets. I'm oriented towards the poetry culture in the United States, and I have to say young US poets writing today are writing powerful urgent work that's just astounding. And there are so many wonderful journals available online: *Glass: A Literary Journal*; *Adroit*; *The Shallow Ends*; *Breakwater*; *Foundry*; *Tinderbox* are just a few; there are so many I could go on and on. *The Rumpus* published a poem a day in April for National Poetry Month and all of them are exceptional. When you find a poem that speaks to you, put the poet's name into your search engine and find more of their work, then read the writers those poets talk about and before you know it you'll have more names on your list of things to read than you can imagine.

For people who enjoy listening to podcasts, The New Yorker Poetry podcast is a good place to start; there's a podcast put out by the Poetry Foundation called VS, hosted by Franny Choi and Danez Smith; or Commonplace Podcast with Rachel Zucker.

And then sit down and write. Even if you think you can't, you can. We all have things we think are beautiful, we all have things that break our hearts. We all have things to write about. If you want some help or guidance there are plenty of resources out there. Some of my favorite craft books are *The Poet's Companion* by Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux; *In the Palm of Your Hand* by the late Steve Kowit; and *The Crafty Poet* by Diane Lockward (she actually has two volumes of this book). *The Daily Poet* by Kelli Russell Agodon and Martha Silano provides a poetry prompt for every day of the year and, very helpful to those of us living abroad and trying to keep our postage costs down, is also available as an e-book. And then just write and then just write more.

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### GETTING TO KNOW JENNIFER

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** My children play hockey, and I think we can all think of stories of great athletes who behave badly, indeed even criminally, away from the field. I tell my kids "It's not enough to play well. Be somebody worth looking up to." This

applies to every field: if you're a great director and a lousy human being, that's not good enough. If you're a great writer and abusive, that's not good enough. If you're a great painter and treat the people around you horribly, that's not good enough. There's a lot of talk these days about separating great art from the misdeeds of the people who produced it, but I think that's not good enough. In the artistic world this might mean not working with certain directors or staying away from certain galleries. For me in the literary world, this means not publishing my work in places that don't call out some of the racism and misogyny that exist in the literary world. I'm speaking of the US scene, I don't know what might be going on in other literary communities but this is a very real issue in the US literary world right now.

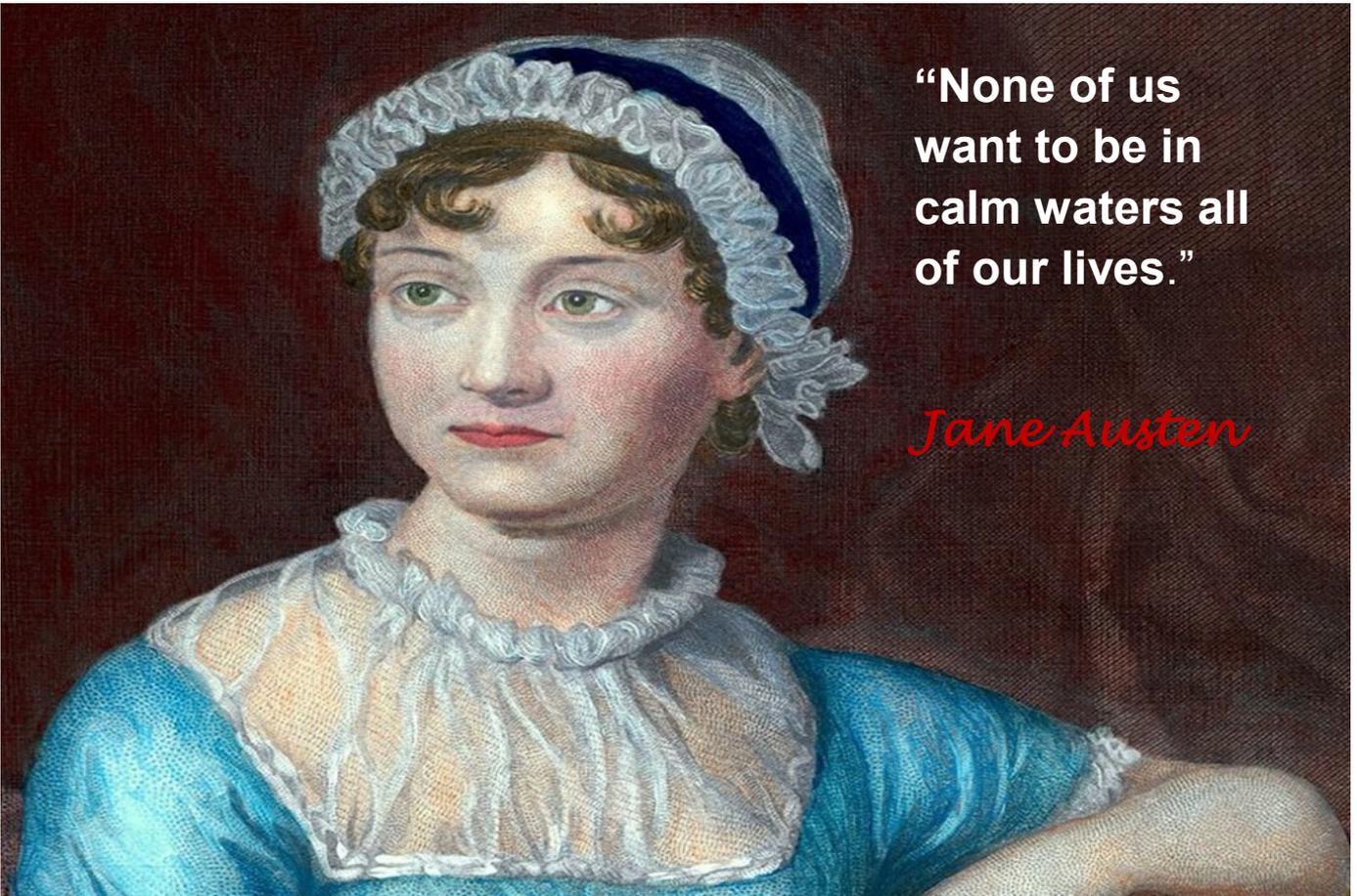


**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** This question might be impossible for me to answer. Every book on my shelf has taught me something about myself and about writing. Different books become more or less important to me at different stages in my life or

as I'm trying to solve different problems with my own writing. And so many of my books are marked up and written in and underlined and have sticky notes all over them, and all those markings are like a roadmap of the people I've been. If I had all my poetry books on an e-reader then I could cheat and say I'd save the e-reader, but the act of marking up poetry texts is too important to me to move away from my paper books. But at the moment the answer to this question is my copy of *Forest Primeval* by Vieve Francis, which has been a pivotal book for me the past two years or so in terms of learning how to write more deeply into truth and a radical vulnerability. Vieve Francis is one of the best poets writing today, her work moves me deeply as a reader and teaches me something new as a writer every time I read it.

**What is your favorite word and why?** *Chuchichäschkli*. It's a Swiss-German word for kitchen cabinets. I love its sounds and rhythm and the open vowels and that it is so, so, so very Swiss. My goal in life is to use *Chuchichäschkli* in a poem.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** I would love to talk with Anne Sexton. I don't really have a specific question, I would just love to talk with her about being a woman writer and writing through motherhood and mental illness and the work of being a woman claiming her space in the world. I'd love to just sit and drink wine with Anne Sexton and we could talk about whatever she wanted.



**“None of us  
want to be in  
calm waters all  
of our lives.”**

*Jane Austen*

## An Introduction to FAUSA



**There are FAWCO clubs of all sizes and shapes across the world but did you know there is also a group for if and when you repatriate? Therese Hartwell, FAUSA President, tells us more....**

The FAWCO Alumnae USA (FAUSA), the alumnae arm of FAWCO, was formed to help repatriating North Americans keep their connection to their former FAWCO clubs, maintain overseas friendships, and continue to participate in world affairs through various initiatives of the FAWCO network. Members also benefit from the support of fellow returnees in experiencing the joys, challenges and changes involved in returning home to North America.

FAUSA originally started as a group of repatriating former FAWCO members, variously known at different times as "FAWCO West," "the Returning Home Committee," and "the Alumnae Committee". In 1997 the delegates at the Dublin FAWCO Conference voted to meet in Washington, DC to celebrate the year 2000 in America—the first time the conference would be held in the US. For the next three years, under the leadership of Mona Garcia, twenty-one women from all over the US met to organize the 2000 Conference, becoming the nucleus of a new alumnae group. FAUSA was born with its incorporation in the State of Texas on May 1, 2000, becoming a FAWCO affiliate member club before being designated as the alumnae arm of FAWCO in 2003.

At any one time FAUSA has approximately 150-200 paid members living all over the United States, with a few in Canada or splitting their time between the US and abroad. Most FAUSA members have previously been members of FAWCO clubs (generally about 85-90%), but Associate Membership is also open to North Americans who have lived overseas but were not members of FAWCO clubs.

FAUSA is run by a board of seven elected officers who serve two-year terms: President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, Director of Philanthropy and FAWCO Liaison. A slate of nominees is prepared by the Nominations Committee and voted on by the membership. As with many volunteer organizations, finding the right person for our jobs can be challenging, and nominees generally run uncontested.

While FAUSA does not have structured clubs, active groups have been organized in a number of American cities. These groups determine their own structure, choosing whether to meet for social activities, outings, book clubs, philanthropic endeavors or all of these events. Each active group has a Metro Coordinator responsible for overseeing the activities of the group and reporting them for inclusion in the monthly newsletter. Most regions also have a Regional Coordinator.



Most of FAUSA's charitable funds support programs of the FAWCO Foundation. Historically, FAUSA has sponsored both a Development Grant and an Education Award. Currently, we fully fund the FAUSA Effecting Change for Women and Children at Risk DG under the category of Human Rights and the FAUSA Skills Enhancement Education Award, which allows a FAWCO or FAUSA member to acquire new skills or enhance already existing skills. In addition, FAUSA as an organization, FAUSA groups and individual members support the FAWCO Target Project, including three FAUSA members who have committed to donating 5% of their profits from transactions with FAWCO/FAUSA members and those they refer to the Target Project. Over the years, FAUSA has also contributed to other FAWCO efforts, like the FAWCO Disaster Relief Fund.

FAUSA also selects its own annual grant recipient from projects nominated by and voted on by members. The selected organization receives a check shortly after the Getaway and Annual Meeting and serves as the FAUSA Banner Project for the rest of the year. In light of the damage done by the 2017 hurricanes, which affected areas where many FAUSA members live, the Board decided to require submissions for the 2017-2018 Banner Project to be organizations providing hurricane relief in more than one location. Portlight Inclusive Disaster Strategies, Charleston, SC, which supports people with disabilities, including post-disaster relief work, was chosen as the FAUSA Banner Project for the coming year.

Fundraising occurs throughout the year via the FAUSA website, with the bulk of FAUSA's charitable funds being raised at the Gala Evening at the FAUSA Getaway and Annual Meeting, through silent and live auctions and a quilt raffle. The 2018 quilt is being



assembled from squares embroidered by women in the Hope Workshop women's handicraft cooperative at Collateral Repair Project, depicting their dreams of Hope Beyond Displacement. Tickets will be available to FAUSA and FAWCO members online as well as at the Getaway, October 4-7 in Washington, DC. FAUSA is also in the process of developing a sponsorship program to facilitate corporate giving opportunities.

The FAUSA Getaway and Annual Meeting, held in the fall in various North American locations each year, is the highlight of the FAUSA year. The Getaway gives FAUSA members and guests the opportunity to explore North America, learn about FAUSA's and FAWCO's activities, raise money for important causes, reunite with FAWCO and FAUSA buddies, and make new friends. Although the Getaways include a business meeting where FAUSA matters are discussed and voted upon, they are also filled with fun and interesting social activities, workshops, speakers, tours and dining opportunities varied enough to meet everyone's interests and tastes. Generally, a Getaway Committee consisting of FAUSA members in the host city researches and plans the Getaway activities with input from the Board. Members of the Board plan the Annual Meeting that takes place on the Saturday morning of the Getaway.

FAUSA held our 2017 Getaway and Annual Meeting in Kansas City, MO. While KC might not have the obvious glamorous appeal of some other cities, it ended up being a delightful surprise. One of my favorite activities at the Getaway was our visit to the National World War I Museum and Memorial, the only memorial to this war in the US. Our excellent guide made the exhibits come alive and shared his view that the museum should actually be called a peace museum. He

reflected that the horrors depicted in the exhibits should serve as a warning of the price to be paid for war and the need to limit war to situations where no other option exists—a somber but illuminating glimpse into the past with reverberations in the present.

When I was a FAWCO Rep, I truly did not appreciate the importance of FAUSA. I was focused on the expat experience, so I really wasn't thinking much about repatriation. Now that I am back on "the other side of the pond," I realize that repatriating can be just as challenging, if not more so, than expatriating. FAUSA offered me a continued connection to the FAWCO network and involvement in global issues that I had come to cherish, as well as a bridge between my expat and re-pat lives. I am committed, along with the FAUSA Board, to providing that same support to other repatriating Americans.



Let me tell you a little about myself: I am a third-generation native Houstonian. I lived in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for 10 years, where my husband worked for Saudi Aramco, the Saudi oil company. We returned to Houston two years ago and plan to retire eventually in the Austin area, since our children and grandchildren live in the Texas Hill Country. I was a member of the American Women of the Eastern Province and served as Vice President, President and FAWCO Rep. I have also served as the Chair of the FAWCO Human Rights Team

for the last three years.

Since I had not previously been on the FAUSA Board, this first year has been a steep learning curve. I would say that I am most proud of being able to provide a conduit between FAUSA and FAWCO and The Foundation. Because of my varying roles with the Human Rights Team, the Target Project and now FAUSA, I am in a unique position to share knowledge about each of the sister organizations with the others and to contribute to the development of an ever closer working relationship among them.

To me FAWCO represents the opportunity for intelligent, courageous, curious, empowered women to come together to enjoy fellowship, share experiences and contribute together to making the world a better place. I am continually inspired by FAWCO Founder Caroline Curtis Brown's vision of American women living overseas being in a unique position to contribute to global peace, since they have experienced and embraced different cultures and traditions—what many people consider the frightening "other." It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to be associated with FAWCO, to have served for many years on the Human Rights Team and to now participate in leading FAUSA to new heights. On the recent Target Project visit to Collateral Repair Project in Jordan, I had to fight back tears as I felt a swelling of pride as a CRP board member to be sharing the great work that they do, but an even greater pride in my FAWCO/FAUSA involvement. I felt such awe that the other participants had left their comfort zones and spent their time, money and energy to see the project first-hand and such gratitude for the way that our members have embraced the Target Project, not just by raising money for CRP, but also by supporting refugees in their own cities and supporting education for women and girls in general.

So if you have any repatriating members this summer why not give them a [FAUSA membership](#) as a leaving gift! Annual dues are \$25. We will be sure to welcome them home for you! **Therese**

## France: A Textbook Example of a Curriculum Writer



### SHEILA GRIFFITH

*American Women's Group Languedoc-Roussillon, France*

**From: Waco, Texas**

**Lives: Montpellier, France**

After graduating from high school, I went to Rice University (Houston, TX) for my undergraduate degree in Anthropology, Psychology, and Behavioral Sciences. Immediately after graduation, I married Kevin Griffith (also from Texas), and we attended Southwestern Seminary together. There, I completed a Masters of Divinity with Biblical Languages degree. After that, I completed a year of post-graduate studies in Tubingen (Germany), then advanced to earn a PhD in Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity at the University of Virginia. During this time, I also studied Latin at Baylor, UVA, and even in Rome, with the Pope's senior scribe (= the guy

who translates all official documents into Latin). I then decided that clearly wasn't enough education (!), so I headed back to Rice to earn a Master of Business Administration, where I focused on finance and strategic consulting. In business school, my husband and I started our own company (Knowsys Educational Services LLC), which continues to thrive today. Since moving to France, I have continued running my business and writing additional textbooks, but I have been very intentional about adding more "fun" into the mix – exploring the south of France, traveling the world, and even taking up watercolor painting.

I have always loved words and language. I got my first taste of a truly foreign language when my youth minister started teaching me biblical Greek – I was 13, and I absolutely loved it! Since then, I've studied Greek in undergraduate and graduate programs, and I currently teach Greek in online courses and for the Kenya campus of Wayland Baptist University. My mom and my English teachers also encouraged my love of reading and words – and those interests eventually led me to create a vocabulary-builder program (for middle school and high school students) and even to write an English grammar text book.

Today, I continue to write curriculum for my company, Knowsys. There are 3 main areas: math, English vocabulary and grammar, and exam prep for the SAT, ACT, PSAT, GRE, GMAT, and LSAT. In our test prep



curriculum, I teach reading comprehension skills, English grammar, essay writing, and tons of vocabulary (plus math, of course!). I also continue to teach biblical Greek translation courses and am particularly fond of the second-year courses where you really get to move to the application of grammar as you translate and interpret texts.

Since the creation of our vocabulary-builder program, I have become an expert on vocabulary acquisition through both passive methods (e.g., extensive reading) and direct instruction. We continue to expand the application activities involved in our program – plus I now do training and professional development sessions at conferences and school districts on vocabulary acquisition. My love of Greek opened up the opportunity for me and my husband to teach in Kenya. In March 2018, we took our fifth trip to Kenya. On that trip, I taught Greek 4 to a group of about 20 students working on a Bachelor's degree – and got to go on photo safaris in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Amboseli as well as track gorillas and chimps in Uganda. So, my love of language literally helped open up the world for me!



One thing that surprises me about words and language is that, no matter how much you know, no matter how much of an expert you are in the field, there is always so much more to learn – another word, another phrase, another use, another idiom. Plus, of course, language is living and evolving as we use it. I love the challenge of always learning more!



Words are truly the key to communicating effectively. Students often wonder why we have so many synonyms for things in English. I now answer this question using my experience with painting. Let's say I have one type of green paint: green. Great! It's green, and "green" certainly covers a wide variety of colors in nature. But, if I were to try to paint a forest scene with a single color of green, it would just look like a green blob with some trunks drawn in (picture a second grader's drawing). When I add darker greens and lighter greens, the painting becomes interesting. That is the power of synonyms – you can nuance what you mean. Are you *confused*? *Quizzical*? *Bemused*? Perhaps even *flustered* by something? Each of those terms conveys a different state of mind, and it is the variety in our language and our ability to master this variety that adds richness and depth to our communication.

The vocabulary-builder program that my husband and I created is powerful and effective. For those students who've used it, it has had a lasting and positive effect on their writing and their communication skills. I love knowing that something I've created – something I've poured hours of work and mental energy into – has had such an effect on my students' lives.

If you're interested in writing curriculum, there are (in the US, at least), a variety of paths. Some school districts have their teachers write curriculum. A more direct approach would be to get a degree in Curriculum and Instruction and then join the writing team of a textbook publisher.

Working in education, your experience is paramount: if you're going to teach teachers (who will then use your curriculum with students), you have to not only be an expert but also be able to communicate your expertise in a way that inspires others to try your ideas.

### **GETTING TO KNOW SHEILA**

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.**

In May of 2013, I went to Kenya to teach for Wayland Baptist University for the first time. It was a huge commitment at that point – a month away from our booming (and all-consuming) business. The courses were taught on a small college campus in Kijabe, Kenya, about 40 miles (65 km) northwest of Nairobi. Kijabe has a population of about 17,000 and is primarily centered on the missionary hospital. There are a handful of scattered (and tiny) shops. The grocery store is the size of a small convenience store here in Montpellier. There was one restaurant – and it served the same food as the college cafeteria. The road had so many potholes and craters that the drive from the highway to the town was a nausea-inducing, terrifying ride. There were no entertainment options, and the internet was spotty and agonizingly slow. So, when Kevin and I weren't teaching our classes, we had plenty of time to think. Life basically stopped – and it was in that stillness that we had time to re-evaluate our lives and determine to make a change. In that period of stillness, we realized that we needed time – time to think, to breathe, to walk, to be outside, and just to be. And that's what led us to Montpellier, a move that has truly enriched our lives.



**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?**

My personal motto is taken from a man of great wisdom, Yoda: "Do or do not; there is no try." Once I set my mind to do something, I make it happen. Often, that push "to do" has led me



to overcommit, but I find that in this period of my life I'm more willing (and able) to "do not."

**What is your favorite word and why?** One of my favorite words is *idiosyncratic*. I know, you're probably (dubiously) thinking, "really?" Yes, really! It's one of the words I use when I'm demonstrating the power of understanding words and their roots. *Idiosyncratic* comes from IDIO (peculiar) + SYN (together) + CRAS (mixture). So, something idiosyncratic is "peculiar to you." And, we all have our idiosyncrasies – our idiosyncrasies make each of us unique and interesting, and together all of our idiosyncrasies make this world a fascinating place.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?**

Since my background includes biblical studies and the study of Greek, I would love to meet the Apostle Paul, the author of at least 13 of the 27 New Testament books. I'm particularly interested in Paul because his words have had such an impact on Western culture and civilization – and not all in a good way! I would love to ask Paul why he included so many seemingly anti-women statements (like 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.") and how he would apply such statements today. Clearly, such statements need to be contextualized so they can be properly understood – but in many cases we are lacking a clear understanding of the context since, with the Pauline letters, we only have one side of a complex situation (as situations involving groups of people always are). I think the conversation would be fascinating – and raise a few eyebrows too.

## Sweden: A Writer's Festival – A Script for Success

### CATHERINE PETERSSON

**American Women's Club of Stockholm, Sweden**  
**From: Miami, Florida**  
**Lives: Stockholm, Sweden**



I was born into a government family and as a result moved 8 times before I reached high school. This peripatetic lifestyle gave me a bug for travel. And made me open to picking up and moving to Stockholm, Sweden after sitting next to a man with an accent on a plane bound from Chicago to Boston.

I've always been a word nerd. From the time I was a child I was a big reader. And I liked writing. I was blessed with a series of phenomenal English teachers who I hold dear to my heart who taught me to love words even more. My career in PR and marketing always involved professional writing. But I didn't start creative writing until well into my 30s.

To date I've written 5 manuscripts. All unpublished. But it's this striving to improve that made me the perfect person to launch the Stockholm Writers Festival that took place April 13-15 in Stockholm. I am the audience for it. Plus I had the marketing and organizational skills to make it happen.

By deciding to stop complaining that there were no English-language writing festivals in Stockholm and by DOING one, I've recommitted to the craft of writing, met a host of people on the business side, and have, in general become more immersed in the world of words.

Writing is difficult emotionally. If you're not published (and even if you are, so I've heard) you tend to go from opposite extremes: thinking you're wasting your time. Or wondering if you're not actually, deep down, super special. It's hard to stay on a middle road between those two polar states and keep progressing. Having said that It's hard to explain the joy of stringing together thoughts through the written form. It's therapeutic. It's joyful (when it's



not terribly frustrating.) Like any other art form, it's a way of expressing yourself. And telling your truth.

I am incredibly proud of having pulled off an inaugural Writing Festival with panache. Our sell-out audience has given us a lot of praise. They walked away wiser on craft, business and could build community. And hopefully we fulfilled our theme for 2018: "Find your path to published." So, if you want to become a writer I would say: It's like the Nike commercial: "Just do it." And the beauty of writing is that you don't need any special equipment. Wake up. Grab your laptop or your pen. Start today and see where it takes you!



### GETTING TO KNOW CATHERINE

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** In my 20s I moved to New York City. I vowed (very dramatically, I was in my early 20s after all) that I'd never leave. I lasted five years. That was my first lesson in, "Just do it." And also, a lesson in, "Dreams change." To this day I love going back to visit but leaving opened the door to the rest of my life. And I'm grateful I walked through it.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** "Click your heels three times and say, 'There's no place like home.'" In other words, just like Dorothy, so many of us need to believe the power is within you. You don't need someone else to endow you with it. Make it happen. (See the Nike slogan quoted earlier!)

**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** I love Tom Wolf's *Bonfire of the Vanities*. It's just a perfect snapshot of the go-go 80s of New York City. And it's laugh-out-loud funny. In some ways the themes in the book of class and race struggle are more relevant now than ever.

**What is your favorite word and why?** Fungible. When I was a child, my father told me that if you knew the definition of that word, you were a genius. I know it now, and don't think I am one, but it made an impression. Besides, it's a "fun" word for obvious reasons.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** Jane Austen. I'd like to ask her if all the needlepointing and piano forte playing ever caused her to run into the woods screaming, "F#%k!" Or the equivalent vulgarity of the time. Between the confining clothes, and the confining attitudes, how DID they do it?



## Connecticut: FAWCO is “a-Twitter” on Social Media



### ELINOR BADANES

***FAUSA and American Women of Surrey, England***

**From: Bloomington, Indiana**

**Lives: New Canaan, Connecticut**

Not long ago, on the occasion of my daughter's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was asked to speak about my own 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. What an opportunity to think about my first 30 years and to think about where life had taken me. On that day I was in a reflective mood as I had just turned 60 as she was turning 30. I know my first 30 years were most influential in shaping who I am today. From hometown roots a mile from the campus of Indiana University, I remember dreaming of the day I would jump in my Chevy Camaro (my dream car at the time) and move to the city. My dream didn't really define

which city, but it was a city. I am here to say that sometimes dreams really do come true. A month after I graduated from IU, I did in fact jump in my car (a Chevy Chevette) and I moved to Cincinnati. From there I moved to New York and on to Copenhagen with my new husband, Alan. My journey continued back to New York and on to London where we would stay for 12 years. Home is now one hour from Manhattan in Connecticut.

It's hard to think of a time when I wasn't surrounded by words. As the daughter of a university professor, verbal and written skills were valued. I have three books on my shelf today written by my father. For any misbehavior, my brother, sister or I would be sent to our rooms to pen an essay on the topic he assigned. This seemed quite brutal at the time but perhaps was, in fact, a gift. As kids, we were offered money to read volumes of the encyclopedia during our summer holidays. The cash was quite tempting, I recall. I had a childhood book of poems which I read until it was tattered. After college, when I started my career as a retail buyer I became engrossed in all things fashion and read trade publications, books and magazines. I loved giving presentations and writing. Looking back, I think my childhood surrounded by academia while balanced by a Mother who had lived in Paris, served me well.

I have always embraced technology. I remember joining Twitter back in March 2008, exactly two years after it launched. I was slightly dismayed when an organist from Portland, a perfect stranger, followed me. Of course, that was the whole point of social media; sharing, listening and learning from others. The challenge of expressing oneself in 140 characters or less was revolutionary. Since those early days Twitter has become relevant and newsworthy to people across the globe. Over the years, I've live tweeted events, I've tweeted about pajamas, pajama days, family travels, coffee, my pets, lunch, seasons, pizza, my mugs, TED Talks, conferences, webinars, news of the day and the joys of lounging and being idle. I've been followed by colleagues in my field of e-commerce and online marketing, I've been followed by

family and friends old and new around the globe as well as a cat. Twitter has endlessly entertained and informed. My written work known years ago to a Professor's daughter as an essay on a piece of paper has transformed over the years into a blog post, a homepage description, a product description, a Facebook post, a Pinterest board description or, of course, a tweet.

As a Twitter fan for the last 10 years I have been surprised to see The President of the United States using the platform as a megaphone and not often for good. I feel that the most unlikely and unexpected character to occupy the Oval Office has in many ways hijacked this engaging platform. Never before has the world paid such close attention to the tweets of our President.

When I launched my pajama business 13 years ago I knew how I wanted to define it. I wanted to express pajamas as fun, as happy. I promoted the mantra that "Life is better in pajamas." Looking back, I admire my early enthusiasm and hope I still have much of it intact today. The journey as an online retailer has been exciting and stressful, energizing and exhausting, happy and pensive. The economic highs have been thrilling and some lows have been challenging. Through it all, the opportunity to be creative, to sell something I love, to expand the brand across social media networks has been a dream. What a treat to interact with customers from around the world and to see our pajamas truly making people happy season after season.

The first holiday season after I launched my pajama business, I remember being most surprised that my best selling pajama was a footed pajama for adults. My phone rang and rang from customers who told me they had searched far and wide for a warm footie for adults. I heard from a mom whose son was in Iraq and a footie was his one request for Christmas. I heard from another mother whose son was a police officer and he really wanted a footie. It was unexpected and it made my first Christmas in business completely frantic and fun at the same time. The phone rang so much that I had to hire some middle school kids to answer it for me. Only once did a customer ask my young assistant, "How old are you?" When my oldest



daughter arrived home from her freshman year of college she immediately started answering the phone. Within moments of taking off her coat and dropping her bags on the floor she had provided a Texas pastor with a red footie for his Christmas Eve service while also advising another man on the delicate subject of determining the correct size to buy for his wife.

Over the years, I have been influenced by the sweetness, the kindness, and the wisdom of characters from the children's books I loved as a child and continued to love as a mother. Winnie the Pooh said: "Promise me you'll always remember: You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." When I started my pajama company, I began thinking about and embracing calmness, idleness, mindfulness, serenity. Again, I was inspired by Pooh Bear saying "Sometimes, if you stand on the bottom rail of a bridge and lean over to watch the river slipping slowly away beneath you, you will suddenly know everything there is to be known."



I've always thought that the products in my store encourage relaxation and tranquillity in solitude or in family time. Pooh Bear said, "Let's begin by taking a smallish nap or two." and "Don't underestimate the value of doing nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering." So much wisdom from a Bear!

Starting my own business was without a doubt, my shining moment. What began as a passion for fashion, a passion for technology and a passion for lounging intertwined and [www.ThePajamaCompany.com](http://www.ThePajamaCompany.com) launched in the spring of 2005. As someone who loved wandering through department stores, my love of retail was a perfect match to my love of sitting at my computer in pajamas. Looking back on that year, it was a time where online shopping was new and embraced by consumers as a convenience but also looked at with skepticism and security concerns. Pajamas proved to be a great niche business for ecommerce. I've come to realize that people who love pajamas really love pajamas and will search high and low for the perfect pair.

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### **GETTING TO KNOW ELINOR**

***Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.***

When I was in my 20's I worked in the fashion biz. I was a dress buyer for a department store group. I cared about dresses, about the dress market, about the runways, about what was in Glamour magazine and Vogue magazine.

Then when I was 27, my husband was transferred from New York to Copenhagen. I spent my first months there pretty lost. I met a Swedish woman who asked if I would like to run for Vice President of the American Women's Club. The idea of a women's club wasn't really appealing to me. It seemed old fashioned. I said yes. I was elected and jumped right in.

Three months later the President resigned and yes, I became President of The American



Women's Club of Denmark. In March I attended my first FAWCO conference in Dusseldorf. I was 28. The year was 1985. My life changed forever. I started caring about things I had not cared about before. Kids dying from AIDS in Africa, girl's education, women's empowerment, sex trafficking, child labor, poverty, politics. For the first time since my sorority days, I was part of a large network of women. It was amazing.

I had two best friends in Copenhagen. One was 10 years older than me and the other was 20 years older than me. I was often the youngest person in the room. I learned so much from my AWC friends and new FAWCO friends. I attended the FAWCO conference as Club President in Casablanca in 1986.

Beginning in 1987, we had a few years back in America but I jumped back into #fawcofever when we moved to England in 1991. I attended the Bern conference in 1994 as AW Surrey FAWCO Rep and attended the 1995 Nairobi conference as AW Surrey President. I've since attended a further 20 conferences & IMs. What a transformative moment that 1984 Spring day turned out to be.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?**

*Today, I choose optimism. Today, I'm counting on joy. Someone once told me that I was the type of person who would pop champagne while on a sinking ship. It's true. I've always clung to positivity. I not only hope good things happen. I convince myself good news is always right around the corner. I expect sunny days. I*

expect success. I not only see a glass as half full. I see the glass, yes, full of champagne. I created my pajama business with the tagline "Spreading happiness in pajamas." Virginia Woolf said "The hopes to thrive can nare outweigh the fears." Helen Keller said "No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit."

**What roles have you had in FAWCO?** Currently I am Counselor Liaison for The FAWCO Foundation, and am on the FAWCO social media team running our Twitter account. I am also part of the FAUSA social media team. Over the years I have been President, AWC Denmark, FAWCO Rep AW Surrey, President AW Surrey, FAWCO Club Presidents Coordinator, VP The FAWCO Foundation, President The FAWCO Foundation, FAWCO Foundation Development Grant Chair, FAUSA 1<sup>st</sup> VP.

I look back on my years as President of The FAWCO Foundation and later as Chair of the Development Grants Administrator with particular fondness. Knowing that our work had such an impact on the lives of students and on the lives of those most needy around the world was exhilarating. Forming lifelong friendships with my fellow board members over the years is something I will always cherish. Visiting member clubs and attending regional meetings was always a lovely adventure. Telling the story of our work was never a chore. The passion, dedication, intelligence, wit and style of FAWCO women (and men) then and now has never wavered. A particularly sweet memory for me is when my tenure as President of The

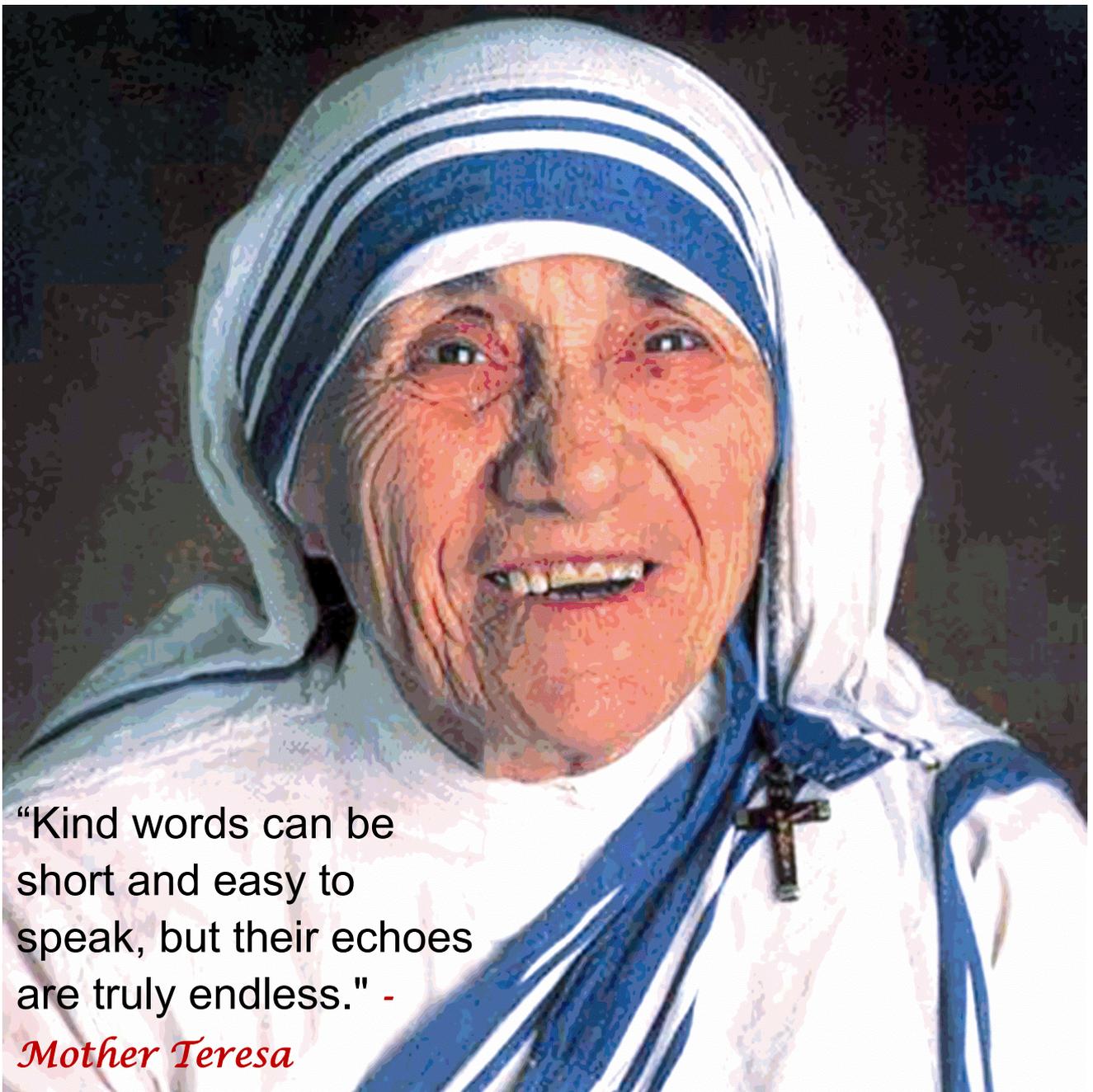


FAWCO Foundation overlapped with my close friend Pam Dalgren's tenure as FAWCO President. It's a melancholy moment to think of the hours, the cappuccinos, the cocktails, the meetings, the taxi rides, and the trips we took together while doing the business of FAWCO. What fun we had. We lost Pam way too soon.

I was a club President in my 20s when I arrived on the FAWCO scene at an Interim Meeting in Dusseldorf in 1985. It seems like yesterday. From where I sit today, my first thought of what FAWCO means to me is friendships. These friendships were not just fleeting. We didn't go our separate ways after a regional meeting, after a conference, after a term of office. We kept our connections. We planned for our next

positions, our next events, and our next contributions. As I arrived at the conference hotel this year in The Hague, I felt the same surge of adrenalin I've felt many times before knowing I would see familiar faces, knowing I would be reminded of so many moments.

Today, I celebrate our UN engagement, our UN voice. Today, I celebrate our impact through our Target Program. Today, I celebrate our Foundation, our Backing Women fundraising for good. Today, I celebrate our voice in Washington and the impact and importance of our voter registration. Today, I celebrate our FAWCO social media presence, our voice on Twitter, our community on Facebook. Today, I celebrate friends.



“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” -

*Mother Teresa*

# Scotland: Successful Writing for the Digital Age



## LILLIAN SMALL

**Association of American Women of  
Aberdeen, Scotland**

**From: Toronto, Canada**

**Lives: Aberdeen, Scotland**

I was born and raised in Canada to Portuguese immigrant parents. They taught me the value of hard work, and throughout my schooling I was a strong student. On a whim, I enrolled in university in the Chemical Engineering program and did very well; I then started on a good career path at a large oil company. During university, I met my husband and a few years after we graduated we bought a house, moved in together, travelled a lot together and got married. Then, in 2013, he was offered a transfer to Paris, France, with his company and thus our expat life began. I quit my job and with little prospects of continuing my career in Paris, I explored other interests, passions and career

options. Since then we have moved to Aberdeen, Scotland.

I clearly remember the day my mother gave me my first diary while in elementary school. I always loved to read and write. Admittedly writing and reading got pushed to the wayside when I was deep in my engineering studies. But even then I knew I had a skill for writing that many of my engineering colleagues didn't have. I started my first blog in 2007 to document my 6-month student exchange in Sydney, Australia. I loved recording every part of that trip and sharing it with family and friends. So, when I moved to Paris, I started my current blog, [The Smalls Abroad](#), to document our life living abroad. It was through this blog that I began to think of what my new career path could be. That prompted me to go back to university for a Masters in Digital Marketing.

Today I write in my own personal blog, and I write for my clients (blog posts, social media posts, podcast show notes) as part of my services as a digital marketing consultant ([www.lilliansmall.com](http://www.lilliansmall.com)). While in Paris I learned my third language, French, and also translated copy from French to English. Most recently I was awarded a spot on the Parfitt-Pascoe Writing Residency program at the Families in Global Transition Conference. After an 8-week writing mentorship program, I



attended the conference to report and write articles on the conference sessions, as well as write a book review. My work will be published in a book later this year.

My world has evolved to be more creative. As an engineer everything was black and white, technical and analytical in nature with little room for self-expression. Diving into the writing world has helped me understand myself better and accept that life is full of many shades of grey, too. Being accepted for the writing program brought me to the [Families in Global Transition](#)



conference where I feel I have found my tribe – other people who live globally mobile lives. Because of that conference and the writing program, I've come to appreciate my own life as a cross-cultural kid and the life and experiences of my husband, who is an adult third culture kid. Overall, it's just enlightened me.

I've surprised myself with my ability to transform myself and my career. Through words, I've completely changed career paths to one that is creative, flexible and gives me the ability to fully enjoy expat living. When I first quit my career, I had no idea this was even possible for me. I've learned that I love to learn. I crave information and new skills. I see myself learning and creating for the rest of my life.

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### GETTING TO KNOW LILLIAN

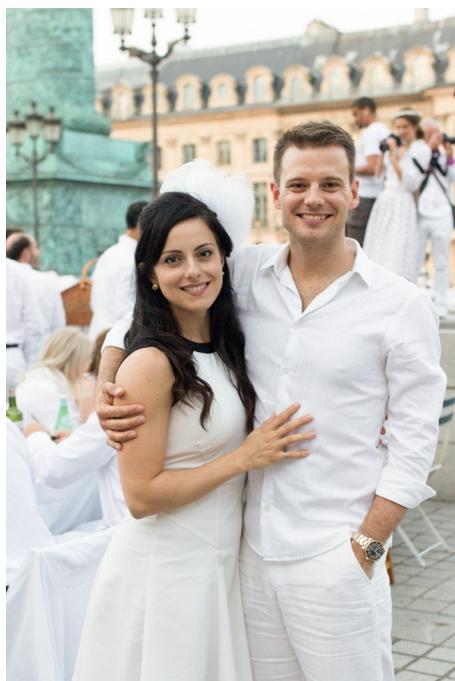
**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** The moment that made a big difference is when we decided to move to Paris, France. It changed everything and gave us the best years of our lives (so far!).

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** "Make the most of it." I see every situation as an opportunity to grow and learn. In my leisure time and in work, I always push myself to make the most of it, seize the opportunity and try to give and take as much as I can.

**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** It would be a blank journal in which I could continue writing about my thoughts and experiences.

**What is your favorite word and why?** Serendipity. I like how it flows off the tongue and love the meaning of it. I've been fortunate to have experienced many serendipitous moments in my life and they bring me joy just thinking of them.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?** Paulo Coelho. I'd ask "What story do you regret not writing?" He's one of my favorite authors. I've read his work in both English and Portuguese and read *The Alchemist* twice. The question is like asking "What's the chance you regret not taking?" and, to me, is a way of revealing the person's fears in attempt to learn from them. I wouldn't want to regret not taking a chance or not writing a story. So I'd hope to learn from it.



# Rome: Notes from a “Traveling Wordmonger”



## PAT FOGARTY

**American Women's Association of Rome, Italy**  
**From: Providence, Rhode Island**  
**Lives: Rome, Italy**

I began as straight word-nerd, with long-ago B.A. at Brown, M.A. at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and PhD studies at Yale. But one event gave all this a new compass. What's now become an international word and language life began during summer of my junior year at Brown, when I studied at the University of London. My dormitory was in the heart of Bloomsbury; we had students from every nation studying British art, architecture and law. 'In the day,' classes were held two streets from the British Museum. I got a taste of the kind of self-growth that multicultural contacts offer. So, when I later worked as a free-lancer in N.Y.C. publishing and decided I needed a gap year, I packed for sunnier Italy. In Florence I met the

project engineer for the Italian high-speed lines; we married and moved to Rome, where I joined the American Women's Association of Rome, a perfect blend of women from around the globe. Since our son is now a parish priest in Holland, we've added that destination to other European and US locations. Thanks to computer-based work, I've become a travelling wordmonger. Oh, I also tell stories – publishing mainly short ones – and they're set all over the world.

Memory traces my obsession with word-mongering to my maternal grandfather. When I was a child, he loved telling me the vast array of leprechaun tales that had come down through the family from their origins in Ireland. I understood that the shenanigans of these little green men made the story – my first intuitions of plot. I began inventing leprechaun tales to entertain him, and I've been playing with words, stories and books ever since.

Today I write fiction, mainly short stories. Also, I've been editor for a Rome publisher's English series featuring Italian Arts; in this series I both translated and edited. I've been translator for various academic articles and journals here, for translation is a fascination with words and their



trans-active life. Currently I write articles for periodicals and have a regular book review column, *Scriptorium*, in an Italian online magazine.

Let's face it: I was intrigued and then driven to deepen my relationship between my native English and Italian. In Florence I briefly taught English in what's here called an *Istituto Superiore*. Then I started translating, which is a challenge and a deep immersion into your second language.

It's always wonderful to see how deeply curious people are to understand each other and how willing they are, even eager, to learn enough of another language to communicate. Words name the world around us; they are the explanation we rely on. As to my own involvement, I find there is no end to experimenting with stories or intensifying skills of your known languages. Mine are English, Italian and French. And, given my son's work, I'm now a raw beginner in Dutch.



The English language series on Italian arts that I was part of was a useful spur to other English language books on the lifelong achievements of selected Italian actors, directors, choreographers and even jewelers. The first books in the series went to International film festivals, and I was both surprised and delighted to see "my" Marcello Mastroianni book on sale in the MOMA book store. In the photo above I'm holding an edition of a volume presenting the brothers Taviani filmmakers; on the fly leaf they've written a thank you to me as their translator, and I cherish that.

### GETTING TO KNOW PAT

**Tell us about an event in your life that made a big difference and why it did.** Clearly my gap year in Italy led to my transformation into an Italian-speaking wife and mother. Incidentally, it broadened my work base to a second language.

**What personal motto do you live by and how does it affect what you do/don't do?** Can't imagine what my personal motto might be except 'DO.'

**If you could only save a copy of one book/play/poem from the flames, what would it be and why?** The King James translation of *The Bible*, for its exquisite language.

**What is your favorite word and why?** Dictionary. I have nine of them on my Kindle. They open the door to yet-unknown meanings.

**If you could meet one writer, dead or alive, what question would you ask them and why?**

I would love to have a one-on-one chat with that mystery master, ever-publicly reticent Agatha Christie. Who knows if she'd be willing to reveal a few plotting secrets from beyond the grave.



# Inspiring You

Founded in 1931, FAWCO is a global women's NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), an international network of independent volunteer clubs and associations comprising 62 member clubs in 32 countries worldwide, with a total membership of around 10,000. FAWCO serves as a resource and a voice for its members; seeks to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide, especially in the areas of human rights, health, education and the environment; advocates for the rights of US citizens overseas; and contributes to the global community through its Global Issues Teams and The FAWCO Foundation, which provides development grants and education awards. Since 1997, FAWCO has held special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**FAWCO is an international federation of independent organizations whose mission is**

- **to build strong support networks for its American and international membership;**
- **to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide;**
- **to advocate for the rights of US citizens overseas; and**
- **to mobilize the skills of its membership in support of global initiatives for education, the environment, health and human rights.**

## MAGAZINE FEEDBACK

We want this magazine to be interesting for all FAWCO members. In an effort to provide articles of interest to all of our readers, we have created an online feedback questionnaire. It should only take a few minutes of your time to complete and will be a great help to us!

Please click on the link or paste it into your browser  
to complete the survey.

<https://s.surveypplanet.com/HkepS19YRG>

Thanks very much indeed!

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## Coming This Fall in Inspiring Women!

**We Profile the Women We Know,  
the Women We Are...**

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful  
committed citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

**Margaret Mead**

Our fall issue will literally be the mother of all issues. We will present the profiles of women from our clubs who are walking the walk. Through their insistence and their persistence, they have set out to right a wrong, elevate justice, and make the case for a better human condition.

We invite everyone to submit the names of candidates from their clubs who are making their mark in their communities. Big issue or small, we want to dive deeply into the psyche of those who step out on the ledge of a troubled world and join the journey to make it a better place.

Women's rights, children's rights, poverty, hunger, health or the environment – there are challenges everywhere we look. **The difference is that these women did not look away.**

**So now it's over to you, we need :**

**Candidates:** Send the name of the candidate, her club affiliation, her email address and a BRIEF description of why she would be an interesting person to profile, to Liz MacNiven: [inspiringwomen.editor@gmail.com](mailto:inspiringwomen.editor@gmail.com) no later than **August 8, 2018**.

**Cover Page Image:** This is a call to all our members who make a difference in this world. Perhaps you are involved in a community, at home or far away from home? Through this you are engaged in things that you are convinced to be right and important. I bet you took pictures of the place or the people you are involved with that would send a strong message to your fellow FAWCO members. By **August 31, 2018**, please send them to me, Marie-Bénédicte Luxem, [inspiringwomen.cover@fawco.org](mailto:inspiringwomen.cover@fawco.org). They must be **PORTRAIT orientation** (landscape photos cannot be accepted), digital and color, 150-300 dpi quality and 5-10 MB max. and taken by a FAWCO member with details of where and when the photo was taken. (N.B. Accreditation will be given for photos used but no payment is possible.)

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