

Dear Potential Seminar Participants,

Writing to Remember - Blue has been offered many times. Each semester we look forward to seeing our returning members and to meeting those of you who are new to the group.

Our seminar meets Monday afternoons from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Our meetings are held virtually on Zoom.

Participants in this seminar write about their lives and experiences. Some members write continuing chronological narratives, while others organize their writing around significant life experiences, people and places they remember. Some write in prose, others in poetry.

You may wish to prepare handouts to be emailed in advance or to have a show and tell (chronologies, photos, documents) to help other members follow your oral presentation.

Some write for themselves, some for their families, their children and grandchildren; others may be writing for possible publication.

People who have taken the seminar in the past range from those for whom this was a first attempt at writing to those who have been writing for years.

Although this is not a writing class per se, the comments each reader receives from the group are often very helpful to both the beginning and the more experienced writers.

Writing for the seminar is done on one's own time; the class time is for reading and commenting.

We schedule two or three presentations for each session, with part of the time allotted to each person for reading, and part used for discussion of the piece read.

Each participant reads twice during the semester. One is a shorter work (about 10 - 12 minutes); the other is longer (about 20 - 25 minutes). A sign-up sheet will be available at our first meeting so you can choose the dates for your presentations.

You may wish to prepare handouts to be emailed in advance or to have a show and tell (chronologies, photos, documents) to help other members follow your oral presentation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email either of us.

We look forward to seeing you in February.

Henny Lewin 413-253-8836 Carol Jolly 413-296-4254

Writing to Remember  
by Stephanie Schamess

I ask myself: am I really writing to remember? Or do I write because I remember? Perhaps I am writing to be remembered? And if so, by whom? For whom am I writing?

I try to sort it out, to develop a nice, neat package of answers to my questions. It doesn't work. I end up thinking in circles, even in ovals and ellipses, but never in straight lines.

I understand this much: I don't write so that I, myself, will be remembered. No, scratch that, it's not what I mean. Let me put it this way. I look at the word "I" as it appears on the page. What a tall, skinny pole of a letter. Many other languages flesh out the I by giving it more than just one letter. je, yo, io, ich -- and in Hebrew, ani. But in English we're stuck with this spindly unadorned letter which has to bear, all by itself, the weight of the fact that it represents not just some isolated linear core self but rather the untidy aggregation of the people, events, experiences and knowledge that make up our memories and therefore our selves.

The I comes with a lot of baggage, baggage that isn't neatly packed in a wheel-along suitcase. Each of us is toting it inside of us in cluttered drawers, some open, some tightly closed, some spilling their contents out unbidden. Often in the act of writing, a previously closed drawer opens and we find ourselves digressing -- or perhaps, the opposite: we might find ourselves saying what it was we really wanted to say all along.

I realize that for me, writing about my memories is like having a conversation with the people I'm carrying as part of my baggage. When I write about them, I'm bringing them back to life, recreating them, continuing to acknowledge that they are a part of me, of my living self. While it's true that when I write, I'm mindful of the external public audience of my potential readers or listeners, it's also true that I'm writing for the internal private one of the people who appear in my mind and heart asking to be remembered. They well up from deep inside from whatever drawer they've been inhabiting, and emerge on the page as vividly as they came and went in my life.