

Julia Stone, age 62, was born in Portland and has lived in Oregon her whole life. She loves writing and photography and is working on several projects, including letters to grand-nephew Kaligah, who is 8 months old. She lives at the Watershed, a community housing development for low income seniors. The Watershed is where her first Write Around Portland workshop took place, and she deeply appreciates the warmth of the community there.

**What was your experience of being in a Write Around Portland workshop?**

It was really great. I love being around other people who love to write. It's great to see people who don't even know how much they love writing but are curious to see what it's like. I enjoy seeing people learn more about themselves and blossom.

**What was it like to write with other people and hear their stories?**

I always looked forward to the writing group. I would have gone three times a week if I could have! I treasure it when people share their life experiences – we're all unique and have had completely different backgrounds, and yet there are similarities. What people said in the group resonated in my heart and soul.

**What did you learn about yourself from being a part of the workshop?**

I learned that I could be out in the world again, in a community of people. In the previous group I was in four years ago, we kept writing together for four months after our group ended. I was just out of a 22-year relationship, and I was devastated. I wrote about that experience in the group, and there were some tears, but my group was so supportive. In the second group I was part of, I wrote about the death of my brother who I had just lost. It was difficult to process that, but it was wonderful to have the support of the group each time.

**How did you feel about reading at the anthology release party?**

The reading was three days before my brother died, and it was very moving for me. I had been estranged from my niece, my brother's daughter, for sixteen years, and I invited her to come to the reading. I didn't tell her that the piece I was going to read was about her dad, and I was worried that she wouldn't accept what I had written. As I read, I looked out into the audience and saw that she was crying, and I was crying too. It was such a beautiful cycle of life, and so healing.

