

Prior to 2006, sixty-five-year-old Ron Rood had good vision, full-time work, and plans to retire. Then, in 2006, Rood suffered from a retinal detachment causing vision loss and later learned that he was going to face severe hearing loss. Instead of letting this defeat him, Rood was inspired by others with disabilities, such as actor Christopher Reeve, to move past his physical limitations. One of his new experiences was Write Around Portland's Spring 2014 workshop at Medallion Apartments, a housing community in NW Portland for seniors and persons with disabilities. The workshop, he states, "was a brand new page in my life."



What was your experience with writing before Write Around Portland?

I wrote in college and once I finished college I said I'm really not going to write again. I was burned out on writing. And I never wrote. I never wrote letters. If I needed to communicate with family or loved ones it was always by phone, never by letter. Then this spring a friend just said, "You better take a Write Around Portland workshop," and I just said, "No, I don't think so." And to make a long story short, I'm here.

It helped me to just open up a whole new avenue for me. I realized that I did enjoy writing; it was a valuable part of my life that I'd just thrown away and really didn't even use it. And now the writing aspect has become a fun part of what I do. I write now, maybe not every day but three or four times a week, probably. I sit down and write something. I've written stories to families, friends, all kinds of different things. It's been fun.

How do you think the workshop changed your confidence in your writing or in yourself?

Well, it started my writing period. You know, because I hadn't written for years and years and years and years. Forty years, I think, probably, and it was something that I really didn't want in my life (laughs). And through Write Around Portland it was that I realized, "Yeah. maybe it is something I want in my life." So it changed my whole view 180°. It changed my whole outlook and my whole view on the importance of writing to myself.

How was it sharing your writing with others and having others share their writing with you?

That was very powerful. It was powerful in the sense that, for one, we all felt secure. It was not something that was gonna be published on the six o'clock news or whatever. It was something that was gonna be kept within our writing group and so it was much easier to open up. And by opening up, it empowered all of us.

What was it like to be a published writer?

It was astonishing to some of my family because they'd never read any letters from me for years and years and years and you know it wasn't something we even talked about, and all of a sudden for me to tell them I got something published it was like, "What's the world coming to," you know. They were totally shocked. One person I have not written yet that I will, and she might have a heart attack, is gonna be my ex-wife. So I'm going to surprise her. And actually she's quite a writer, and I never have ever intended to be one. So I'm actually gonna surprise her. That'll surprise her.

Would you recommend going to these workshops for other people?

Oh yeah. Very much so. My experience, I think, it says it all.

What would you tell people that maybe were more reluctant writers like you originally were?

Try it. I mean, you know, you're protected. Your privacy is protected, it's not something that's going to be invasive or whatever. Give it a try, even if you've never written for forty years (laughs). Try it!

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience?

Other than I highly encourage anybody to try Write Around Portland even if you've done very little writing. It's not a writing course per say; it's more of an opening up of yourself. And I think all of us protect our inner self, which is important. But on the other hand, sharing of our inner self can be empowering to ourselves and to other people.