

Featured Writer Interview with Miriam Kling

Miriam Kling, 64, was born in Warroad, Minnesota. She spent her childhood moving back and forth from the Midwest to Portland, OR, dividing time between working on a farm and growing up in the city. She attended Mt. Hood Community College, Concordia University, and received her BA in Theology and Social Sciences from Valparaiso University in Indiana. She currently lives in Portland, OR where she is an active member of the Hollywood East community, and a proud mother and grandmother.

This past fall, Miriam participated in her first Write Around Portland workshop at the Home Forward, Hollywood East Apartments, a living community for seniors and people with disabilities. The workshop rekindled Miriam's joy for writing and inspired her to write more; she says her goal is to write her life story.



Memories

by Miriam Kling

stuck in my head
more ideas
amaze me
thoughts
come flooding back

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Interview with Featured Writer Miriam Kling:

Interviewed by Write Around Portland intern Emily Palmgren

How did you get involved with the Write Around Portland workshop?

I heard about it through my apartment building, here at Hollywood East.

How did the workshop impact you?

I enjoyed the practice of writing. I hadn't done it for years actually. I didn't know what [the workshop] was going to be like, but I wanted to do something to grow as a person. I enjoyed the prompts, and it surprised me and brought back a lot of memories.

There will be prompts that remind you of your earliest memories, your family history, or your childhood, and then there will be prompts that talk about, you know, what do you like about fall?

Which prompts did you enjoy the most?

The ones about family and about the awareness about the world around us.

You have a degree in theology. Did you find spiritual inspiration in the prompts?

I brought my journal today! I wrote about my childhood home, and my apartment. I wrote about my grandchildren. [In some of my writing] I went into my imagination. And I wrote about the landing on the moon, and remembering that, watching that with my dad. The poem [I wrote] "Tell me why" talks about God. About God, there were a couple poems I wrote—"In the Light" is one:

"In the light I can see the rays of the sunshine.
In the light I can see the bow of the rainbow beaming,
In the light I can see the children playing on a green mowed lawn,
and in the light I can see the love of God."

God is talked about as being light. I wrote about my newborn grandson, and that wasn't an in-class prompt, I just needed to write about him. I didn't write a lot about God, but I tried to when I could.

I wrote down a couple of my favorite songs from my childhood. "Que Sera Sera" is one. All the verses are here. You'd think I'd have written more about God, but I guess not. There's a lot of stuff in here. One funny thing is my earliest memory: sitting on my parents' bed and watching them trying to catch a mouse. And I told my brother about that and he said his earliest memory was my parents flushing that mouse down the toilet!

So I've collected a lot in [my workshop journal]. And I have a long ways to go.

Did you go to the anthology release party?

Yes! I didn't know exactly how it was going to be, but it was so nice. A couple of us got together and took the TriMet lift there.

I read a small poem. It was [a style] that I had learned in the workshop. You would take lines out of a paragraph that you wrote. Here's the writing I did in my journal, and then the poem is made from the lines I underlined. It's called "Memories." So, I did that one, and even though it's short and small, that's the one they published. It feels nice [to be published]! I went to university and I don't think I was ever published.

I also enjoyed watching others read [at the release party]. It made the experience more personal.

Would you recommend Write Around to others? What would you say about it?

Oh, very much. Oh boy, it's a good experience in exercising the writing ability, and putting your thoughts down on paper. It helps build community because you get to share with each other your writings and then people understand you better.

Did your feelings change from the first workshop to the last?

I had no idea what it was going to be, I thought maybe it would be learning how to write. But it's mostly just giving you the tools to write, and letting you write. Taking this class made me realize that I had the tools to write already.

Do you think you will keep writing?

What I want to do is write my life story, not all of it, but the highlights. I had my mother do that before she died in 1999, and she didn't write everything, but she wrote about ten pages. We made a family book that went back into our family history almost 500 years. I'm glad I asked her to do that. Family stories are so important. You have to write it down.

Did your Write Around Portland experience change, improve or increase your sense of self? Your confidence? Your sense of community?

Yes, all of those things. I want to share [my writing] with my brother, share it with my family. I probably wouldn't have written any of this, or had any organized way of putting it down unless I took the [Write Around] class. That song "Que Sera Sera" is my life song... Whatever will be will be, and it's true.

What was your favorite part about the workshop?

The anthology. I enjoyed people sharing their writing very much. Even people that couldn't share [at the reading] participated in some way. [The anthology] is such a collection of everyone. We're all going to pass away someday, so we have to have our writings. That's why I want to tell my story.

Is there anything else you want to share?

I'm glad to have shared my thinking about [Write Around Portland]. It's such an important cause.