

Featured Writer interview with Marilyn Saxon by Emily Garcia, Write Around Portland Intern July 2013 Newsletter.

Marilyn Saxon, 60, grew up in a small Kentucky town where she lived most her life. She has a daughter, a son, and a very old Boston terrier. Two years ago, Marilyn moved to Portland where she quickly came to love the people, the culture, and the rain. She spends time online as a political activist and is also active in her apartment building, Home Forward's Northwest Tower, a community for seniors and people with disabilities. Marilyn has had chronic severe depression since she was fourteen, and one way she deals with her disability is through writing. She says, "It's been a place where I can put my true feelings because as a depressed person you learn to put a mask on in front of people. But when I write, the mask is off. And I write from the heart, I write the truth..."

Marilyn's writing and an interview with her about her experience writing in community follow.

Interview with Featured Writer Marilyn Saxon  
Interviewer: Emily Garcia, Write Around Portland intern

### **How did you hear about Write Around Portland and come to join the workshop?**

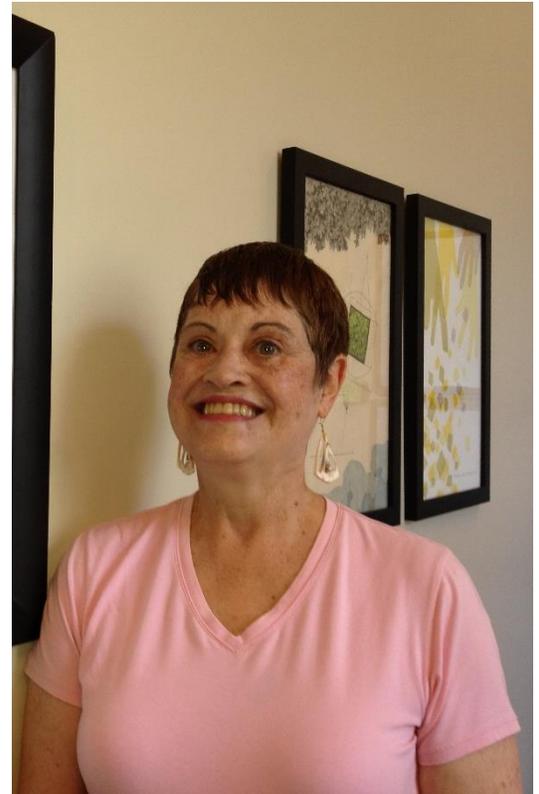
The building [NW Tower] and the people in it are a big part of my life. What goes on there is a huge part of my life. We had flyers up saying we were going to have the Write Around Portland group, and I asked some questions about what it was because being new to Portland I didn't have any idea. They explained to me what it was and I thought, "Oh yeah, that is something that I can do" because I do write other things besides journaling. It was a good decision.

### **Can you tell me about your experience in the workshop?**

The first thing we did was make rules about how we interact with each other in the workshops, and those rules held true all the way through. Nobody violated them. Some of the things that were written and read were confidential, and it didn't go out of the room.

### **Was that important to you?**

It was important to all of us because as we evolved during the workshop I noticed that I and others started writing more personal things – things that help in therapy, things that you would normally talk to a therapist about. And it was very moving at times, it was heartbreaking at times, and it was hilarious at times. We laughed and we laughed and we laughed. And it was a wonderful group of people. We got together and we got to know each other through our writing. And Erika, who was our [volunteer workshop] facilitator, was great.



**How did you feel about writing and sharing with other people and hearing their stories?**

It was nice to see the diversity of our lives. Even though we are in one place with common interests we come from all over. Our stories are all the same yet they are all different. And the creative part – a lot of us kind of get into a mode where we have to pay attention to the grammar, the spelling, the sentence structure and all that, and when we were just thrown the [writing] prompts you didn't have time to do that. I didn't have time do that and I just started writing and it loosened up creativity in me and in others too that was amazing. The creativity just bubbled.

**What was your favorite part of the workshop?**

I think it was when someone in the group would write something hilariously, off-the-wall funny. And we would just buckle out, we'd just, you know, gut-laugh. And there was one particular late friend of mine who is mentally challenged and she wrote about her cats and how her cat was the queen, and I love that. I love that she actually got into the creativity outside of her normal topics, what she normally talks about. And I was proud of her. I was proud of all of us. We represented the NW Towers well.

**How did you feel about reading your piece at the Write Around Portland anthology release party?**

I was nervous a little bit, but my son has this old saying that if he has something to do that he is timid about or is not really looking forward to he says, "I'm going to ride this pony!" So I kept saying to myself over and over, "I'm going to ride this pony, and I'm going to ride it well!" And I did. I was happy with what I had done and I surprised myself. It was a good pony to ride.

**How did you feel about having your work published in the anthology?**

Very pleased. It's something I never thought would happen and it was very important to me. The piece that I wrote was a letter to my grandson about getting a good education because he was not doing well in school. And it was so important to me that I write that letter to him. When I wrote it, I wasn't thinking about submitting it, but then I thought, "This is something a lot people could use." And so I actually had a message that I wanted to get out and published and I feel it's a good thing.

**Would you recommend Write Around Portland to others, and if so, why?**

Yes...It's an opportunity to express yourself, build creativity, actually get out of the house and do something other than watch TV, which is really boring (if you sit and think about it for a while) and meet people. And the final reading is fantastic. When so many people who are different, yet the same, like I said before, get up there and read and maybe it's the first time they've ever read anything, maybe it's the first time they've been

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in front of people, and yet the comfort is there because everyone is embracing you and wanting you to do well. Yes I would recommend it for everybody.

**Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?**

Roughly 33 miles east of the Mississippi River and located on the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers lies a sleepy small town of Paducah, Kentucky. It is there that my soul mate, the love of my life, still lives. For almost two years he has been trying to make the move to Portland. With our numerous disabilities and the expense, with some help from our friends and family, I have faith that he will live in Portland eventually. This is my – our – most important and most challenging goal.