



Stone Circle

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What I've Learned

By Jan Herrick

Where do I begin? My first thought is that time really does fly. It seems like only yesterday that we were preparing for a new millennium...now we are entering the third decade of the 2000's. If that doesn't say that the days and years have sped by I don't know what does.

I have also learned that no matter how I try to ignore it, I am getting older. My mother seems to appear in my mirror pretty regularly now. I also accept that it is not so bad that she does. I have begun to embrace all the things she instilled in me, even as I may have resisted some of them. I have learned that growing older is certainly better than the alternative, and I try to greet each new day with thanks, seeing it as a new day of opportunities.

I have learned that I love learning. It is a privilege to be able to learn new things, explore subjects that interest me, and delve into trying things new and different. Learning also involves utilizing the talents I have been given and learning how to use them to the best of my ability and for good.

I have learned that friends and family are precious and are the best gifts we can ever have. They must be cherished and nourished, and we need to keep them close if not in person at least by phone, emails and other forms of communication. Most importantly, those we have lost live on in our hearts and memory, and their legacy can live on in the young as we pass on their stories.

I have learned that learning comes to us daily, if we open our hearts and minds to the world around us. The more we are aware of each moment the more we grow in mind, body and spirit.



"I hope that in this year to come,
you make mistakes.

Because if you are making mistakes,
then you are making new things,
trying new things, learning, living,
pushing yourself, changing yourself,
changing your world.

You're doing things you've never done
before, and more importantly,
you're doing something."

Neil Gaiman

Submitted by Dorie Croissant

*Women have gathered in circles
since the dawn of history
for birthing,
to share story,
at cisterns for washing,
at fires for warmth,
at wells to draw water,
in embraces of profound joy,
in prayer,
in rings of sorrow and mourning.*

*With hands grasped, we gather our
collective wisdom,
energies and strengths
binding us and
guiding us into the future.
Each woman brings her gifts,
placing herself
as a stone in the unbroken circle.*

© Janet Herrick

Lessons Learned

By Mary Columbo Reichert

2019 was a helluva year.

I learned that distance doesn't break friendships and proximity doesn't guarantee them. I learned you can be desperately sad and still find a reason to smile. I learned that you can feel really good but be really sick (and that it's good to change doctors now and then).

In this past decade I turned 50; earned a Master's degree; changed careers and then earned Board Certification in my new calling. I said goodbye when my son deployed with his Army unit and hugged him tight when he returned home. I celebrated when he graduated college; and when he married his high-school sweetheart; and again when she earned her Doctor of Chiropractic. I emptied my childhood home; left my former home; and began creating sacred space where I am now. I said goodbye to people I loved and re-awakened relationships I thought were dead.

It's been a helluva decade.

I've learned that I'm persistent and resilient; that being outdoors is my "happy place" and being at home is my place of peace. I've learned that a good cry or a good hug can heal and that life is filled with surprises, both good and bad. And I've decided it's all worthwhile.

Affirmation Corner

By Margie Gray

Time Flies...

They say that time flies when you're having fun. I work with adults on the Autism Spectrum. One of our guys claims that, "Time and I are not on speaking terms." Many days, I have the same feeling. When I think about the events by which I mark time, I'm torn between thinking, "I can't believe that was 5 years ago. It seems like yesterday!" and "Was that ONLY 5 years ago. It seems like it was a lifetime ago!"

As time goes by, I do my best to continue to learn the lessons that come my way. When I ascribe to the philosophy that life is about the journey, not the destination, I am much more grounded in the moment. For me, I've learned that it is not about *what* I am learning, but that I am *present* in the moment so that I can learn each lesson that presents itself. It seems like I need constant reminders to be present in the moment.

What is an affirmation? It is a reminder. Here are a few that remind me to be present to the lessons and opportunities the journey has to offer.

- ♥ I am clear and present NOW!
- ♥ Breathe in Light. Exhale Love.
- ♥ I open my heart and mind NOW!
- ♥ My awareness is in this moment NOW!

It seems like the more I learn, the more there is to learn. I'm convinced that is actually a good thing. This journey is never boring and if it's true that time flies when you are having fun, I must be having a blast!

Life lessons ...

By Virginia Strait

While I love to imagine I am very special – reality is I am not. Being the oldest of three girls, I was continually directed to "set a good example for your sisters" – which created a solid sense of pride, a high bar for personal excellence. While I do try hard to be the best me I can be, it is not always a success. Consequently, what I had to develop was a sense of humor so that I can laugh at my own follies.

I had to learn about forgiveness, gifting it to myself is key to knowing peace. I have been made aware of acceptance, to know that I am good enough just as I am. The most important thing to know is God's love for us all and that we all deserve the very best in this life.

Prayer Circle

Linda
Jody
Arline
Lucy
Julie
Kelly

Please let us know the names of those you would like to have included in our prayer circle.

Calendar of Events

The women of Stone Circle meet for regularly scheduled and special events each month. Listed below are the events for the months ahead.

Jan 2020

3	Meditation Series @ Lena's	7:30 PM
18	For Women Only—Orlando	9:30 AM

February 2020

7	Decade Day/Night	
	At Jody's	7:00 PM
15	For Women Only—Orlando	9:30 AM

March 2020

6	Meditation (Soup Supper) @	
	Nancy's*	6:30 PM
21	For Women Only—Orlando	9:30 AM
28	Spring Trip to Mt. Dora Lunch/Shopping Meet at 10:30 AM to carpool	

April 2020

3	Meditation Series @ Lena's	7:30 PM
18	For Women Only—Orlando	9:30 PM
25	In the Company of Trees	10:00 AM

*Please note a change in location.

Top 10 for 2020

By Dorie Croissant

1. *Make each moment count*
2. *Family & Friends are invaluable*
3. *Love unconditionally*
4. *It doesn't take much effort to smile*
5. *Take time to listen*
6. *Be flexible with plans*
7. *Don't be afraid to share feelings*
8. *We learn & grow from our mishaps*
9. *Doing nothing IS doing something*
10. *Spend time meditating*

This list is really endless. Do you have a Top 10?

Happy 2020 to all! May your Top 10 inspire & challenge you.

P.S. If you ask me for a Top 10 list next week, it'll probably be different.

Annual Labyrinth Meditation Walk

On October 26, some of our ladies went up to Woodlawn Cemetery to walk the beautiful labyrinth. Each year we follow this tradition to enjoy the peace and quiet and benefit from this unique but historic meditation.



Winter Solstice

Fourteen of us met at Jill's home this year to celebrate the Winter Solstice. Time was taken to consider the losses of the previous year as well as our hopes and wishes for the new year ahead.

Alas...rain prevented us from casting our symbols into the Solstice fire, but instead we placed them into a box indoors. These precious thoughts were burned later in my fireplace at home safe from the inclement weather.



Salome Harasty

was the co-founder of Stone Circle in June 1999.

She had a strong belief in the power and wisdom of women to effect positive change within their families, among their friends, in the workplace and in the world. She experienced various cultures from Native American to Australian Aborigines. Living in Australia for two years, she became familiar with the beauty and heartache of the Aborigines.

Salome earned a Language Arts Degree from Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, and a graduate degree in Religious Studies from Catholic University in Washington, DC.

She taught creative writing to mature learners with Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, FL, and facilitated a writers' group. Her short stories can be found in *Unsilenced: The Spirit of Women*, Commune-A-Key publishers. She has won a St. Petersburg Times writing award for Flash Fiction. Her stories and poetry have appeared in Eckerd Senior College publications. She was the author of *Building Connections for Women: One Stone at a Time, volume 2, a Stone Circle Guide for Monthly Gatherings*.

Many years as a professional Religious Educator gave Salome experience in all levels of church ministry, and in retirement served as a volunteer facilitator in her church community. She also served as a volunteer visiting hospital chaplain. Her primary focus was the Emergency Room and Critical Care patients.

Salome and her husband Jerry moved to Herndon, Virginia.
They have three sons and six grandchildren.

She passed away on December 13, 2019. She will be greatly missed.

Wow 2020! What I've Learned

..and what I knew:

I knew that nothing is forever.

I knew that good friends are rare and a treasure.

I knew that it's important to say, "I love you."

I knew that stuff can't fill the holes in my heart but that acts of kindness soothe my spirit.

I learned that you never know what's around the next corner.

I learned these things from my mother, the daughter of a line of strong women and a great devotee of Leo Buscaglia, but they were reinforced by joys and heartbreaks and cancer and terror.

I have learned that when I breathe consciously, I am centered; and difficult moments are less frightening.

I can simplify, and I can discard what is excess. And I am better for it.

I feel the loss of my dear, dear friend, Salome. When I learned that she died, I heard her voice in my head, witty as always, saying what I needed to hear. Salome's voice is fading and perhaps those conversations with my friend have accomplished their purpose, and I have said goodbye to her.

I learned that my own heart, broken often enough, is showing its wear and tear.

I love life and every moment of it, and I choose to embrace this pivotal moment with strength and faith and the lifeline of my rosary. I am focused on my joys, my blessings, and I would hold them close.

Nothing is forever, and if my life ends by a heart unable to beat, arteries hardened and clogged, then that is, in the vernacular, the way the cookie crumbles.

P.S. As it turned out, and against all odds, I got my very own Christmas Miracle.

People misspoke, my angels surrounded me in grace, and Damocles' Sword has repositioned itself far away from me.

And I learned that I am blessed with many who love me, who carried me when I wasn't sure I could walk. I learned that to live with faith and hope is grace. I learned that love transcends, informs and teaches my life.

Lucy-ann Day



Gratefulness Luncheon

We had a very nice turn-out for this luncheon at Diane's Tea Room in Kissimmee in November. We all enjoyed our lunches especially our desserts.



Our December Meeting

We always enjoy the assortment of Christmas/holiday hats that Virginia brings for everyone to wear.



Wow, 2020, what I have maybe not learned.

From Dr. Betsy Williams

The end of a year and the end of a decade. So much has happened to the world as well as to me personally in that time. The hopes of the Arab spring long dashed as civil war and unrest continue in the Middle East, thousands of people dying in Yemen, children continuing to die of malnutrition and preventable diseases such as measles, fears of Korea's nuclear abilities and continued oppression of its people, growing power in China and the ongoing struggles in Tibet and for the Uighurs... I could go on and on and have not even mentioned climate change and the natural disasters that now occur regularly. Heat waves and catastrophic fires in Australia are the latest in this long series of disasters with already hundreds of homes lost, many people killed, huge natural areas containing unique animals, birds, plants all burnt, irreparably destroyed.

We finally lost the battle for the women's clinic at the aboriginal medical practice where I used to work. The management closed it while I was in Cambodia in November, teaching swimming and CPR to the Green Gecko former street kids. The aboriginal women protested the closure but were thrown out by police. And social media went wild but all to no avail. Only reinforcing the realization of how little power aboriginal women here have. So I returned from Cambodia to no job and had to quickly move out of the house as it belonged to the aboriginal clinic. My partner and I are both looking for work now, but his year of unemployment has taken a toll and put a strain on our relationship. So everything is up in the air for me right now as we travel through Western Australia, delayed by roadblocks due to bush fires and the car breaking down in 50 Celsius degree heat.

So what have I learned? That maybe we can only do what we can do. It is the effort we put in that counts, not the outcome as Krishna teaches in the Bhagavad Gita. That maybe we have less control than we thought and can only take life one day at a time as a gift, that really may not have been our choice.

I will end with a quotation from Cheng Yen, a Buddhist nun in Taiwan:

"I always have three wishes at the beginning of every year:
I ask not for good health but for an alert, discerning mind.
I ask not that everything will go my way but that I may have perseverance and courage.
I ask not for less responsibility but for increased strength."

Soup Supper

*Please note there is a change in location this year.

On Friday night, March 6, in place of our first Friday meditation/centering prayer, we will gather for a brief meditation and a soup supper at Nancy Abdallah's house in Kissimmee.

This gathering begins at 6:30 PM and is a tradition that we have observed to commemorate the beginning of Lent. Please call Nancy at 407-729-0352 if you are planning to attend.



Decade Day/Night

Decade Day is the celebration of All Women's Lives and All Women's Birthdays, but in particular those who are entering a new decade of their lives (10, 20, 30, 40, and so on) this year. Every decade has its unique gifts and challenges.

Please call or email Jan if you would like to attend and mention if you are one of the inductees this year (a birthday this year ending in a 0). Also, please remember to bring along a candle and holder (votive type that encloses the flame) and a photo of yourself that is at least twenty-years-old.

Decade Day this year will be held on Friday, February 7, at 7 PM at Jody's house.

**Monthly meeting
contributors for the
first quarter of 2020.**

**Jan—Ann C.
Feb—Jackie
March—Virginia**

**Our thanks
to each
of you!**



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Stone Circle operates as a nonprofit entity whose presence seeks to enhance the feminine milieu for women of the 21st century. We truly rely on the generosity of friends and those who participate in programs.