



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series #393

00:00:01 Peggy

Welcome, everyone, to reading 393 of the It's About Time Writers' Reading series. And I can now say, currently the only literary program being offered through the Ballard Branch Library. Tonight, I'm happy to welcome Donna James, Paula Friedman and Joan Red. We're also going to be hearing from Carol Levin. And if you can get my attention properly, I will write down your name for open mic. So the first thing that I would like to do is to let you know some of you were here a few weeks ago, or maybe longer, when there was a sort of tribute to Adori Anshell. And her daughter offered to send us copies that she's put together at her memorial of some of her photos. And she said that what had happened is due to a fortuitous printing error. There were many, many copies. And so she mailed me about 15 because we're quite a number of people here who expressed interest in receiving a copy. The other thing that Elaine shared when she sent me this is that she had finally, as she said: "After much deliberating, I just chose her cremation site marker words. These will go under her name and birth death dates. You, the group, will hopefully appreciate. Poet, adventurer, free spirit." So feel free to let me know if you would like to receive one of those collections. And now I would like to introduce Carol. This is the photo which I hope you can see of the August 11, 1973 wedding ceremony. Is that correct, Carol?

00:02:16 Carol

That is correct.

00:02:19 Peggy

And whenever George Geo, however you knew him, like this picture, he'd always say, can you see? Why, just look at her. Just look at her. Can you see when I met her why it had to be? Just look at how beautiful. So I'm very honored that on what actually would have been the anniversary that we have you here tonight to share with us. So take it over, Carol.

00:02:56 Carol

All right, Peggy. Well, I brought one, too, actually. I don't know if you can see that second photo. That's also at the wedding. All right. But he missed this anniversary, this 49th anniversary, by almost twelve weeks. But I'm here. I have two poems to read, and they're both from my book. This may come out upside down. Probably An Undercurrent of Jitters, which is a book relating to all sorts of marriages and weddings and not weddings and stuff.

00:03:51 Carol

[Reading] "Notice of death. He's not sick and he's not a writer, but my husband is writing his own obituary. Energy leaps him every morning around the lake, exercising his old dogs. Will he expose how crushed by grief he is, as one by one the dog family dies? Will he treat you to his irresistible laugh? Confess he cracks up at my quips? Will he accurately say his heart is assaulted, as I couldn't care less cavalier kill summer flies? I'll bet he'll forget to reveal he helps everyone at the speed of the sound of yes, impish rock contour. He'll recite the tale one of hundreds, how in a cloudburst he shoved the butt of a Saint Bernard up a sliding bank to reunite her with her overwrought owner. Surely he will say that the day he was born he was born to own the sky, addicted already to flight, and very likely he'll not. Say he's not perfect, although I may be mistaken. I want him to brag from his grave that he's a magician who will live for ages in the art he's created with wood. He's not sick thinking over how he will reflect himself in the Seattle Sunday Times. Two strangers scanning the departed born day, year, place. Such and such parents graduated, worked, traveled, belong to sons, daughters, beloved. No, he won't say the usual. Of course. In the course of reading obituaries, you discover only the good die."

00:07:04 Carol

All right. This is Peggy's favorite poem. She's, he says, and I have read it to audiences a lot, so some of you may have heard it. But it's poetry, so we can do it lots of times.

00:07:23 Carol

[Reading] "The most important thing to save when the house is burning down save George. Save the way he says bow wow as he greets his crush of dogs. Save how he rolls on the floor, three dogs clambering over him, licking his beard, how he laughs and how all four of them make those snuggling noises. Save George when he is excited and lifts his heels bobbing off the floor. Sometimes drops of spittle sparkle in the corner of his lips while he tells stories and can't talk fast enough. His cut hands are calloused raw from working wood. Save the way he looks at them and shrugs. Save George, who never looks at dirt. The worst person to clean house. You can't save him regardless, as you follow him around to find what messes he misses. But watch. He can't pass the coffee table without setting each item in the spot. He insists it must be methodically. He moves the deco birchwood box at eight of an inch, straightens the album exact lying, edge to edge. Don't forget to save the way he walks room to room, brushing his teeth. Even if you find the toothbrush abandoned on the kitchen counter or top of the dresser, save it. He is a hugger. This is the most important thing to say when the house is burning down. Save his hugs and how when he hugs, he says that's nice. I needed that."

00:10:06 Peggy

Thank you, Carol. I'm so glad you were able to do that. This is not easy. No, of course not. I first met George and Carol because I was reading in the actual Ballard Library and we were sitting where they always sat, even though they put us in the children's section that night. And we got to talking and I was so captivated. I said, oh, I think I have to come and interview you. And so I wrote a teasculpt love story with House. And then I said, you have to have my fiancé over because he needs to know to move to Sunset Hill. And so it was done. And within a matter of two months, we were moving to

Sunset Hill. That is the power of George and Carol and Sunset Hill and the love story. Peggy didn't tell you. She and her fiancé had been engaged for four years and neither one of them would leave the particular house they were living in. That's why she brought them here. It worked. Thank you, Carol.

00:11:24 Carol

Thank you, Peggy.

00:11:26 Peggy

And now we're neighbors. Okay, we now return to our regular programming of featured readers. Our next reader is going to be Donna James. Welcome, Donna.

00:11:40 Donna

Thank you.

00:11:43 Peggy

Donna has spent 39 years being individuals and couples in the intimate confines of her psychotherapy consulting room. After long years of academic writing, she returned to poetry, her first literary love. Donna's poetry gives literary voice to the stories of idiocy, affliction, spasms of hope and resilience that are peculiar to the human psyche. Her work has been published in numerous online and print journals. She's attracted to the ephemeral nature. Her icky bunny process also influences her pruning poetry. Be gone. All right.

00:12:27 Donna

Thank you. It's about time. Thank you, friends and family who are here, fellow writers and fellow readers. And Peggy, thank you so much for your undying dedication to this institution. You are a treasure. I'm going to read eleven poems. None of them is very long. I write short. I think it's my faulty attention span. Here we go.

00:12:58 Donna

[Reading] "Faint. If she hadn't happened to be a princess, she would still have noticed the pea, though she would have taken it for granted. Some small stone or clod of dirt or pine cone, any of the usual impediments to sleep she was accustomed to among the rough straw or bows from the forest floor making up the stuff of the mattress of her bed at home. What would have impressed her was the softness of so much down."

00:13:42 Donna

This next poem is called Damascus, as in Saul on the Road to Damascus and the Conversion damascus.

00:13:55 Donna

[Reading] "I came home from my office to a dark house. I found him on the floor, turned him over, shook him, punched. In 911, she talked me through CPR between pushes. I yelled at him or whatever that was floating. Don't do this to me now. We're still in couples counseling. Aware it was a lie, I

thought, oh, no, he'll never get to see the end of the third season of Dexter. And I can finally get this damn wall to wall carpet out of here. Fire engine, ambulance sirens. Men filed in, one of whom said, look, the blood is already starting to pool. Another asked me, Please leave the room. I sat on the front porch, where I began to fathom this had happened. Men filed out saying, Sorry for your loss. Maybe there's a God, I ventured when they had gone and no one could hear an odd visitation that it counts as conversion. Death struck one fierce bolt to a heart, and I rose up agnostic."

00:15:11 Donna

People don't understand that. I think that's a funny poem. Okay, this next one has the title of this poem is a word that not very many people have heard.

00:15:24 Donna

[Reading] "So the epigraph is the definition of the title word oblate a layman living in a monastery under a modified rule and without vows, somewhere between loosened and impenetrable lies fog lies maybe and guess. Some days I believe that monks in caves focused on nothing ripple out into this good garden. Believe there is in pockets compassion. Some days I'd believe I am my own illusion, but for the taste of salt."

00:16:12 Donna

These next two short poems are about my response to the world situation, or at least the world situation before the Supreme Court did its overturn of Roe v. Wade. I still don't know how to write about that one. Write what you know.

00:16:29 Donna

[Reading] "I feel my feelings about Ukraine and Uvaldi while I squat in my garden shooting portraits of bearded irises mushrooms on earth daily where gardeners spread a thin layer of manure skull of a small bird, the only body on the ground and protocol late Monday I wondered strolling the garden what's going on today in Danbos? I hadn't wondered much of anything days of her weekend visit except what conversation would we wander to, and what and where our next meal? What books is she reading? What discussions with other friends? Donbas and I reenacting dichotomous rituals in competition since first people gathered."

00:17:34 Donna

OK, this next one is just for fun. I wrote it for my friend T. Clear and it's about chickens. She writes a lot of poems about chickens.

00:17:49 Donna

[Reading] "Birds of a Feather. If I raised chickens, I'd wear a kitchen to coop for food laid from scraps awake, aroused by another creature's nature if I raised chickens I'd cluck religiously sam or adhan a call to morning prayer and breakfast of eggs. If I raised chickens, I'd succumb to the temptation to strut around the yard flap my elbows, thrust out my nose and raise up my knees when I was sure no one was looking. If I raised chickens. I'd have relationships with chickens instead of crows who don't depend on me for lunch I would have to pay someone to feed my flock when I went away for days if I

raised chickens me. I ask crows my haunting questions they reply with pause and clicks not entirely unlike chickens clucking less constant disinclined to stay home nights pluck out my eyes if I try to steal their eggs. If I raised chickens, I would have a never-ending well of metaphors for perils and pleasures gleaned from my own backyard. In conversation with chickens my metaphors are black as feathers on a palm aided head that perform snow entertaining antics. If I raised chickens. Coyotes would come for supper. Blood splattered everywhere, foul feathers flying."

00:19:28 Donna

Okay, so seldom does my clinical practice and my word poetry practice come into collision. But this is an exception to that analysis.

00:19:41 Donna

[Reading] "Sexuality at pecuniaria. Sex, money, loaded for everybody. You getting any? How much does it show when you strut? How does it feel when you find it in your pocket? Do you finger the jewels alone or use them in trade? What are you willing to risk for it? Display? Betray? Do you use keyboard and screen for your most exciting transactions? Does somebody have to be beaten for you to feel satisfaction? Is it hard to resist a piece of it that belongs to somebody else? Does it make you feel young, important? Obscene? Tell me, you and sex and money. Tell me everything."

00:20:39 Donna

All right. This next poem I wrote in recognition of my friend Alan's 70th birthday, which occurred six weeks after my 70th birthday. And we had similar things on our minds.

00:20:58 Donna

[Reading] "Dissolution, if not this time, sometime. You will not return from a trip. You will hike into hills or deserts or paddle out to sea and be gone. You wander bears ears alone with sleeping bag insulin, flirt with fate to reckon you are 70. You are not alone. There are rattlers and cougars and blazing sun. We all talk about it. Get to the woods or the snow or the water be taken before dementia or tumor takes from us what we cannot bear to lose. Let us be taken like the rabbit near the thicket limping and knowing it's time, lets herself be taken to gut and fur in the meadow. I want intimates to read to me affirm, sip bourbon from a spoon overhear conversations in the kitchen. Family and friends come to sit an hour. I want to wrap in the rise and resolution of string quartet 15 the movement that is a convalescence song of Thanksgiving while eyes succumb surrendered to dwindle from organ failure, hip fracture, diaper hooteo by somebody kind enough to wipe spittle from my chin even when I can't remember her name. I will be eaten from inside, lose all control. Go graceless a pigeon poisoned on a sidewalk. When I was in graduate school in English literature 50 years ago, I got to go into Susie Lo special collection and look at theater Retki's journals. And so this is for all of your poets out there. Retki granted a pass to page his journals in an inner sanctum of paper and binding. I breathed his words handwritten. I'm not going to tell you I deciphered all his scribbles, and a lot of it just jottings, except for here and there in the middle of nearly illegible glyphic. I could see it, that indispensable line from a classic in the modern canon that throw away. He reread later and nestled in a poem, a squirming breathing thing that cries out what this is being human guides the wrestle to find where the

numinus resides, searches for what at this old age we cede to call enough shows how we might rescue from the cellar a smelly root or cutting and urge it on alive and budding."

00:24:04 Donna

All right, this next poem begins with a made up word that my back fence neighbors used to describe that phenomenon. When you go to a place in your house and when you get there you cannot remember why they call it destinisia.

00:24:23 Donna

[Reading] "Evolution. Destinisia hits midquest to the second floor. Why am I here? What am I pursuing? I spot the stack of books on the top step I put there as a reminder. The woman who reddens my hair has a book exchange in her foyer. Understand I must get there or go completely gray as the rest of me dims to disappeared what I read in papers. My world is a garden opened windows, Turkish carpet breeze disturbs obsidian chimes. There are refugees and cages at the border. We used to travel in trees now we are upright walkers. Fruit munchers to killers short trek in a big expedition of unknown origin ambiguous reason wither next myths and wishes I a tiny strand. No genetic error go nowhere from here not a ripple disturbs the atmosphere on my way downstairs and last fall is coming leaves after summer's had her fill falling length of days fall in a slippery driveway down a steep hill what befalls you as you age slide into your final season? As you fall from youth's grace falling behind and never catching up it's coming the fall from the garden of plenty into endless fire rain do you remember a time of wonder freefall? How it felt when you fell from him your fullon fall from virgin to woman the force fall on your knees." Thank you.

00:26:28 Peggy

Thank you. Donna, I love your way of looking at the world. It's never going to be a collection of your work. Anything in the offing?

00:26:38 Donna

I've put together three or four chat books and then I don't send them out because by the time I get done with them, I can't stand any of them, so who knows?

00:26:47 Peggy

Well, you need to give them to somebody else then to mail out, because I would like to have a lot more accessibility to your work. And in addition to wanting a copy of all of those, I absolutely have to insist that you send me a copy of If I Raised Chickens, because obviously all of us who have friends who have chickens need to have that phone. I have an urgent need for that home, so I will hound you until I get it.

00:27:18 Donna

Thank you.

00:27:20 Peggy

It was lovely to hear you've graced us with open mic recently, but it's been too long since your last featured reading, so thank you. Thank you so much. Well, on to our next featured reader, Paula Friedman. Paula is an organ author and editor whose fiction has received push Cart nominations, as well as awards and honors from New Millennium Writing, Oregon State Poetry Association, Soapstone and others. Her new collection is of Elegant Time 22 stories. Welcome, Hola.

00:27:59 Paula

Thank you. I want to add to your request to Donna. I want a copy of that book. Your work, too. I mean, this is one of the best readings I've heard in I don't know how long. Thank you. So I am going to read a story that's about four pages long, and I believe it will take about eight to nine minutes to read. And this is from my new collection. And the title of the story is Bad Force.

00:28:40 Paula

[Reading] "It had been there, the fear perhaps since she was born, and certainly since she could remember. It was there in every recollection of those wallpaper rooms, those elegant overheated houses. It was there later in every season of what already seemed the middle years, years when she helped care for her father, wishing she had once told him of her admiration ration, but able only to sit embroidering another scarf and to watch his mind decay. The last fact she had thought at the time in that repetitious tragedy of feudal riots. Before then, long before she had given up trying for another semester of university, ceased to hope that she might write great works of philosophy and instead had gone to work to help pay for her younger sister's therapy, her older brother's tuition. Later, many years after her father's death, when her mother, dependent and helpless as ever and now lacking a husband's shield, died, she had shouldered all the details of her mother's funeral, all the pain with her own children. She gave nights to seedings and illnesses, days to field trips and doctor appointments, waking moments to keeping the kids from knowing that what's happening over there in Europe, in the South Pacific, in the war, could still reach across the seats. She had taken care of rebuff through the girl's year of constant fevers and nightmares. She had striven to protect the child from learning of the TV, most likely incisive and probably won't become active illness, the Richmond doctor had said. But who could trust the diagnosis in this ignorant southern city to which the war had forced Mel's entire bureau to move? But at least they had all loved the Victory Garden. And later, after the

00:31:10 Paula

atomic bomb and after the war, in those years when rebuild was so terrified it was not yet called school phobia, she had let the girl stay home, striven to be less snappish with her. But she found she was guilty of referring Robbie as quick and cuddly a child, but more steadfast, Nariba, more open. Her boy, though, when the kids were bigger, too, is just bright, she would remind them. The elder gets praised, the younger gets kisses, but a middle child gets nothing, she had thought when the war was long over, the hard times behind them, the house mostly paid off when the kids had grown, she and Mill might travel, and there would be time for themselves. But he died so soon. From the beginning she was there with him, waiting for the long week at the hospital, protecting him as she had scribbled to protect her feelings father and always ignoring that thread, as finally one must soothing the children with long distance calls, and never then or since, in any way letting herself obligate them. Afterwards, though, it was time for herself. The dark old house was sold, the years of constant laundry and

cleaning done with the new apartment, if rather small, shown and sparkled. Her cotton curtains glimmered in the sunny kitchen. A cerulean pool gleamed in the building courtyard below. If now it was too late for scholarships, too laughable to go back at my age to college and in any case ambition pointless, given that other knowledge. Still, she might spend happy hours in simple things visiting and shopping with friends, walking down these shaded streets with kindly inquisitive new neighbors, or at least between the back to back bouts of slew all winter long. As soon as the weather cleared, she flew out to the coast, visiting Rob and his wife and the joy she had longed for, perhaps not so much as to share her own ideas, seeing her newborn granddaughter, not really her only grandchild, of course, but it was hard to fully count that unseen baby whom Reba had given up for adoption. Rob's wife was reserved, however, more reserved than ever, and so, to avoid imposing in their home, she finished by staying in a motel, when, in July, after yet another flu, she split, as the kids would put it, to Europe to spend time with her unhappy daughter. Reba humiliated her in public, harshly, irritably, and in a hotel on Khan's Luda, very thin one night awakened her. Mom, you snored. But she had determined to put up with her struggling daughter's moods. Ferriba was secretly heartbroken, unable to speak up for herself with that too charming and thus again abandoned. And so good night, reed with the ear, she had replied, and turned over in bed. Besides, she couldn't help the snoring, that's part of the sinus trouble that kept hanging on. One evening, hours before she was to leave for the States, at a corner cafe near Metro Opera, she and Reba began finally speaking woman to woman, discussing, of all things childbearing, how good that Reba had come to confidence, seeing that there were shots to group of tourists at the very next table. American Mrs. Grundy types, she had thought, but of course not, said they had broken into spontaneous mama and daughter laughter. 15 minutes later, as they parted underneath the capital M of the Metro entrance, reba turned and spontaneously grasped her in a big bear hug, but only that once. And how did they really feel about her, the children, their letters so proclamary Armel's friends long ago who used to make baseballs of her, quote, lead unquote biscuits. Or his family with their constant criticisms, the people who would have laughed at what she might have tried to say, the right to say, to think. And the nurses here who, seeing her brother, knew the doctors appeared so kind when they changed her IV. The intern cuffing out his shoulders, suggesting perhaps a rabbi. Didn't they understand she knew no point all that the chicken's eyes must see its severed body flapping. She would not bother anyone with their fear. Yet if nobody understood, she had not meant to be a burden, that she had meant rather all those things she had not explained, this knowledge. There was no way now to tell them she would be dead soon. They might laugh on and on, and she could not change it. It was this, she thought, struggling. What was meant by the piece of the grave?" Thank you.

00:37:54 Peggy

Could you read that last line again?

00:37:54 Paula

The piece of the grave.

00:37:54 Peggy

I wanted to make sure I heard properly the very last line. It could have been the other. See, I went to the other one first. Thank you for clarifying. Thanks so much for joining us here tonight, Paula. All

right. Our next reader is Joan Rut. Joan was born in New York City and grew up with many children of other European refugees. She, in turn, relocated far away to the Pacific Northwest at age 17 for college, a commune, and then art school. In her family of origin, each generation literally spoke a different language, and she finally turned to art to express feelings she did not necessarily have names for. Her stories describe her history and her travels two marriages, two Northwest cities, and raising two sons born 23 years apart. Her motivation for wanting to preserve her memories is the growing absence of people who share the same memories and stories. She believes most people only get to live, get only one life, and on only one coast, she has gotten at least two tickets to ride. Welcome, Joan.

00:39:20 Joan

Thank you, Peggy. Hello. I'm going to read stories from my book, building Solid a Life in Stories, from the chapter on Childhood, the Arts and Craftsman.

00:39:35 Joan

[Reading] "For years, in good weather, he would sit centered on a park bench in the same general area each time, his paper shopping bags perched as sentinels both beside him and at his feet. The children could not get too close to him, even if they wanted to. We didn't know his name. Hey, Mr was probably the closest we got. Still, we swarmed him to watch his amazing hands at work or to beg for art supplies. He recognized no one who did not speak nicely politely to him. And more importantly, we each had to promise to finish the art project. If we were not dedicated to this work, then, Godlike, he would withdraw his help and give no more instructions or supplies. What wonders he himself could make out of nothing. The most impressive one for sheer drama was a palm tree made out of rolled newspaper, then slashed this way and that with sharp scissors, and unfurled. It was deemed too complicated for us children, and moreover, it required his scissors. We young children were sent to gather discarded Popsicle sticks seven of them, to be exact. For some of us, this meant buying Popsicles so as to have at least two beautiful, clean, freshly licked sticks. The arts and craftsman would briefly caress a stick or two. We brought him to demonstrate with, and quite suddenly he would weave the ends of six of them into a sturdy star of David, with the 7th stick woven in to hold it with. Proudly we showed these to our black nursemaids or our white mothers. Dirty. Where did you pick up so many? From the ground, fully, with every star completed, though, there was a smile from the man. Jewish children lived in New York, maybe, but were alive. His own accent was thick, indistinguishable to me from the many European accents I was surrounded by in New York in that era. He was undoubtedly a refugee, a survivor of some sort. One wintry day, as it was growing dark, my mother approached the man. I see you're not well, she said in her best doctor voice. We will walk with you. He protested mildly and would accept no help with his shopping bags. But he let us accompany him. He was clearly short of breath. We all walked slowly out of the park toward Central Park South. There he turned for the tall, fancy Essex House building, tipped his hat to my mother and went inside. We never ever saw him again in the park. My mother thought he had probably died. Apparently he had the appearance of someone with advanced heart disease. He was heavy, he was old, he was unutterably sad, except in summer, when he sent us to fetch seven Popsicle sticks for the stars. He dressed well on greys, a gray fedora, a gray overcoat a grey suit? It's possible. His shirt was white and his shoes black. He appeared to be a gentleman, dignified in, dress like an uncle or an

accountant or something. I'll be damned, my mother kept saying. I just knew it. Knew what, Mommy? I wanted to know that he was probably very rich. She said, only the very rich can be so eccentric. And so I wanted to see where he lived."

00:43:01 Joan

Story two antisemitism. This is in the chapter called Resistance. It was unusual for me to be trimming pottery in a long dress.

00:43:12 Joan

[Reading] "The ceramics department was holding its annual Christmas party, and our teacher had gathered most of the students around him so he could hold forth in the manner of professors everywhere. This time, perhaps after a holiday beer, he got started on the iniquity of Jews and their widespread influence on world economics. I was sitting at a small distance, working on my hand thrown pots before. They would become too dry to trim their bottoms or feet. I stopped my wheel and picked up the metal stool I had been sitting on, holding it as a shield in front of my chest. With two hands and with its legs pointed forward, I walked slowly toward the group. I don't think I was limping or not much, as I was a pretty good walker at that time. I aimed my trajectory right toward the teacher as the other students peeled away. I kept my face blank and continued to advance. He started to blabber. I didn't mean anything and take it easy as I continued forward. When he was finally alone, abandoned by his enablers and clearly frightened, I stopped in front of his towering presence posture. Convinced I'd done enough, I returned to my pottery wheel with my stool. He never made anti-Semitic remarks in class again. I did not report him, though someone else might have. I had said nothing, and I had not touched him with my weapon. By the next school year he had left for a variety of reasons, among them that he did not much care for teaching."

00:44:49 Joan

Lost at Sea from a chapter on perspective I don't think they even had a radio, or if so, not a very powerful or complex one.

00:45:04 Joan

[Reading] "Not enough to get help. I do not know if they were even able to call for help. Their wedding had been in the backyard of their rented home, featuring the handmade trimmering boat the groom had built himself. The honeymoon was to be its maiden voyage a trip across the Pacific to Hawaii. A memorable feature of the wedding were the long faces of the parents of the beautiful 20 something bride. The parents must have been romantics, as she was named after a tragic Shakespearean character. She was also the beloved of my own boyfriend, who had inadvertently introduced her to his best friend, losing them both to the instant attraction his two friends felt for each other. I was present at the wedding only as a prop to support my boyfriend as his two friends married. Afterward, the newly married people gave away the rest of their possessions before their honeymoon trip. Please store it for us for when we return. I got a heavy oak rocking chair, an oak dining chair and an old sweater of the grooms. I still have the chairs. I regifted the sweater to my boyfriend some months later to hold his friend close after the boat disappeared without a trace. For months and then years, he imagined that they had perhaps found shelter on some deserted island and they had not, of a


certainty, drowned mid Pacific. The groom knew materials. He knew an oak chair was a thing of permanence. But perhaps he could not imagine the ocean or his homemade boat foundering. And why did she join him in essentially a suicide trip? Perhaps it was to prove her foolish, foolish love, her confidence in a man who liked to make things with tools but did not have enough humility to see himself as only human in the face of God's creation. The Pacific Ocean."

00:47:07 Joan

This is the little players from the chapter on Serendipity.

00:47:12 Joan

[Reading] "The little players lived in our building. They were a repertory theater of astonishing marionettes who spoke and danced and sang. The characters were both male and female, sometimes at the same time. Years later, one of the company's two people wrote to me that they considered themselves to be my guardian step angels. They took care of my imagination while I was reinventing myself as someone who was going to live out my life. They telephoned upstairs whenever there was a cancellation and there was going to be a free seat for a performance. I would put on a dress and be effortlessly folded into what was always a packed house. A neighbor read a glowing review about the repertory company of marionettes and their creators, animators in faraway London. It took longer for them to get press in the United States. Surprisingly, my first dentist incompetent and painful work had practiced out of this same ground floor apartment. It only just occurred to me that a place of dread for me was totally replaced by the magic of creation, imagination and performance by two partnered men in an atmosphere of expressiveness and joy. I think in many ways that their act of charity and saving me free seats saved my life by turning some of my home values on their heads and encouraging me that the life of the imagination was life squared. Bill sang, he acted, he did voices and made the marionettes dance. Years later, my homemade clay puppet heads convinced my hardheaded father that perhaps I had enough talent for art school. Last one from wholeness tablecloth for the brokenhearted. The two sisters, now elderly and one widowed, went directly to Portland, Oregon. When they arrived as children from Russia in old age, they retained a sort of country girlishness unspoiled by any stay on the East Coast. On a visit for tea and cookies, we sat around a big round table covered with a huge accreted crocheted tablecloth. I did not ask if it was dyed with tea. My own grandmother would dye dingy whites with strong tea to renew them. Also, brown tea was what was most likely to be spilled so it would not show. To crochet a tablecloth must take a long time and a good deal of patience. Girls in particular were schooled in patience. In the old days, that was the point of making up a Trousseau of largely handmade or crocheted or hand embroidered items to acquire enough patience to put up with a man and with a family. When my oldest brother wanted to get married at 21 or 22, my mother gave him her most tangled, fine and thin necklace chain that she had in her jewelry box, as well as a single straight pin. If you can untangle this without losing patience, she said, then maybe you are old enough to get married. He did succeed with the necklace, and he did get married to his high school sweetheart. They had two sons and divorced when the boys were both young teenagers. On that first visit, the two sisters showed me the underside of the apparently clean and perfect tablecloth. Underneath, resting on the tabletop were all the bread and cake crumbs from several meals, ready for sweeping when convenient. The elder sister crowed with delight over how the tablecloth itself reduced her housework. But I took an entirely different lesson.



Let the crumbs go. Let them pass through. Keep the nuggets in any larger pieces of bread, of cake, of a relationship. Memory is available to us to revisit either the good memories or the bad. Look at the good ones often."

00:51:26 Peggy

Thank you so much, Joan. What a lovely, varied evening. Proud to be of the Ballard branch. I do want to give a nod of recognition. I get too much credit here because the founder, Esther Healthgot, is here, and all I've been trying to do is carry on what she started. Although I have to admit that if we're in our 30th years and I've been doing it for ten years, at one point I will have to accept that I've been doing it for a while as well. But this is Esther's baby, and I'm still trying to just keep it going for her. What I'm going to do now is thank all of our readers and Carol and your invites all over the country for coming here and joining us tonight. This will later be available on our It's About Time Writers YouTube channel and also as a podcast on the Seattle Public Library site website.

