

OVER THE EDGE

Zelda Lockhart

Professor, Author and Heartfelt Inspirer



DECEMBER! I love December for so many reasons: the weather, the closeness to family, the feeling of things coming to completion for the year and the opportunity to set new goals for the new year. I love the spirit around gift giving. During this time I really enjoy employing my imagination. Writing is one of those ways for me to create gifts from the heart. This year my gifts will be a new book I've completed that is a reflection of my past, my home and my family. What inspired me to write a book? A most gracious giver from the heart and our *Over the Edge* person of the month, Zelda Lockhart, author of *Fifth Born* and *Cold* (not water) *Running Creek*. A woman whose gifts are so grand and inspiring I consider her an *Over the Edge* giver! As always, don't forget to take Part IV of our five-part self-assessment Edge Meter Survey at the end of this article.

UNCLOGGING CREATIVE BLOCKS

Sipping tea at the Blue Coffee Café in Durham, I look into Zelda's eyes for the answer to my first question. "Zelda, what are you thinking about?" She laughs and points to the painting on the wall, "My mind is moving like that painting right now," she smiles big, then laughs again. "There are ideas and thoughts swirling around in here (she points to her head). I just can't organize or capture them all."

I glance over my shoulder to see a beautiful abstract painting with 1000's of swirls and colors and somehow intuitively understand Zelda Lockhart's dilemma. I dive into a series of questions, as I feel hungry for her secrets. "How did you know you were a writer, and when did you realized you needed to write?" I ask her. She smiles and with no hesitation she says, "Just a few weeks after my first child, Travis, was born. He is now 21 years old. I remember

after he was born, sitting and feeling anxious. I had so much more to do but I did not know what was bottled up inside, sometimes even like bugs were crawling on my skin trying to find ways off me and onto the ground. This feeling actually scared me!"

"I thought maybe it was postpartum depression or maybe I was going absolutely crazy. One day," she continues, "I just decided to sit, do nothing, just sit on my bed from the time I woke up until time to sleep and I did, with the exception of feeding and changing the baby."

A few days of sitting went by and nothing happened. Then one day glancing to the side of the room she spotted a journal that was a baby shower gift from a friend. She picked it up and started writing. "It was like an instant feeling of freedom and the beginning of a new life for me."

TALENT NEEDS NURTURING AND MENTORING

For me, looking back on my own artistic experiences, sometime after Christmas 2006, I had been feeling creatively clogged. I had no idea what to do to get my juices flowing again. I had an anxious pent up feeling. Trying to write, no more than a few words would hit the page. One day as I was waiting to meet a friend for lunch, I glanced at a bulletin board.

"For many artists, the struggle between paying the bills and living the passion is tough."

Staring me in the face were the words, "Get your Creative Spirit Back" Writing Intensive for Women; "A nurturing five weeks of Sunday retreats guiding you to release your creative spirit" with the tear off numbers at the bottom of the flyer. I've never actually called one of these from a bulletin board but there was a little voice telling me to call. The voice on the phone was so

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warm and caring I just knew she understood. The person made me feel safe, caring for my fragile creative ego. I enrolled and started my journey with Zelda.

For five Sundays, in her quaint, country living room on Firefly Lane, four other women and I wrote. We dug deep into our souls. We were inspired by each other while being nurtured and encouraged to take writing risks. We shared and wrote more.

The experience was non-critical, non-judgmental, encouraging, light hearted and fun. It was a perfect place to experiment,

“Zelda, you hold your head high and be proud of who you are. You are an intelligent young lady!”

dive deeper in my current works while creating new ones. Best of all it was a wonderful workshop that allowed me to explore creative freedom in my writing. Yes, this workshop was like my personal Drano to unclog “creative constipation” as a friend of mine calls it.

MANAGING INTELLECT

So who is Zelda? As a young girl, Zelda explains that she grew up “with a storm behind me suctioning me back while the future was staring me straight in my eyes. I somehow knew there must be more for me!” She is thankful for her intellect, as she believes it saved her from being sucked into the storm.

She also remembers the mentors in her life. A strong influence was her seventh grade teacher who approached her one day and stated boldly, “Zelda, you hold your head high and be proud of who you are. You are an intelligent and beautiful young lady!” Another teacher could see the stresses weighing on the face of young Zelda. This teacher sent her a consistent message to “just relax.” Something about these teachers kept her moving forward. She knew there was more for her to do in her life and the way out was education, learning and reading.

Although intellect is what she felt

saved her “from being swept up in the storms,” she is quick to note that intellect’s evil twin could also be the thing that endangered her true talent.

She stares me down and repeats, “Intellect can keep you from your truth, your talent.” During one of Zelda’s workshops she attended to improve her own writing, she remembers taking her poems (her first writings) and asking the instructor why they were getting longer and longer. The instructor smiled and said, “You are on your way to writing novels.”

Zelda was looking for what was wrong, not the truth in her own writings. She created characters, mixing truth with fiction and the outcome was dynamic. She now writes, teaches and mentors young talent. This is how she gives back, touching people’s lives in some inspiring way. Her books and writings connect her to many all over the world. Zelda’s works offer healing to those in pain and inspiration and pleasure to those who enjoy reading.

TAKING HOLD OF YOUR FUTURE

So many people have stories brewing inside them whether fiction or truth. Zelda realized she could impact and connect with people by offering writing workshops. She has a master’s in fine arts and is an associate professor at Louisburg College. She continues to write books while doing workshops for children and adults.



Zelda also cares for her own college-age son and six-year old daughter as a single mom. Over the edge busy, over the edge giving, she has a heart bigger than the city she lives in. I attended the Writing Intensive and within four months after completing the workshop (more like a mini retreat) I had a finished, self-published book in my hands. All because of Zelda’s inspiration.

For many artists, the struggle between paying the bills and living the passion is tough. Zelda acknowledges this to be a constant balancing act. At the end of the day she believes that if you do what you love, the money will come. What she loves is to impact people with her teachings, mentoring, works and spirit. She truly has an “Over the Edge” heart. What better time to recognize Zelda for her gifts than this month of December.

