

THE ORDINARY AND  
EXTRAORDINARY:  
STORIES FROM THE HEART

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*The Night Shift*

*At four-thirty in the morning  
you are still staring at the ink in front of you.  
They are only words  
you did not conjure. Yet, you let the lines carry you  
from page to page, the manuscripts piling  
like sand castles. Your study. Your basement fortress.  
Everything worthy stored  
in that gray file cabinet.  
Your life alphabetized,  
dates and places ordered  
in academic balance. Even your children  
stuck inside the folds of envelopes that hold their  
report cards, school pictures, newspaper clippings.*

*You told your daughter you loved her  
six hours ago, before she went to bed  
and soon she will rise to leave you.  
When you hear her  
rattling dishes, creaking the floorboards  
above your head, you will only glance at the ceiling,  
the monogrammed pen she gave you  
for your fortieth birthday  
still moving across the lines.*

- Laurarose Zimmerman (1987)

My daughter Laura wrote this poem that was published in Quarry, the Indiana University literary journal, when she was a sophomore in college. She describes how as an adolescent she viewed me attempting to weave my many roles as mother, friend, wife, daughter, artist, and scholar into a unified whole.

As a young girl growing up in the Bronx, New York City, I never anticipated I would take the turns and deviations that have shaped my life. May Stevens created a series of paintings that juxtaposed her mother, the ordinary woman, who through life's abuses spent the last part of her life in a nursing home, with the extraordinary woman, Rose Luxembourg, the Russian revolutionary. The ordinary and extraordinary also are two themes that have resonated throughout my life and career and

serve to help me view where I have come, where I am now, and where I hope to be in the future. The attainments of the extraordinary woman have always been more expected and I have more easily incorporated them into my psyche than ordinary ones. Births, deaths, marriages, friendships, and myriad domestic happenings, often caught me off-guard but as each year passes, they become the wellsprings from which my life's energy flows. On this occasion of receiving the 1993 June King McFee Award from the Women's Caucus of the National Art Education Association, I will attempt to re conciliate the ordinary and extraordinary through a number of stories that hopefully will serve to thread together seemingly disparate parts of my life.

**Story 1.** When I was in the midst of completing my doctoral dissertation in 1977, I traveled to an NAEA conference, the city in which it took place, long forgotten as it melds with the many other NAEA conferences I have attended in ensuing years. There, I was fortunate to meet June McFee who was staying in a room in close proximity to mine. When we met, I told her I was analyzing and critiquing her Perception Delineation Theory as the topic of my dissertation. We spent the next three hours in her room trashing around ideas and challenging each others' precepts and concepts. I learned a vast amount that evening. I was sharing ideas with this extraordinarily intelligent woman who took time to meet and discuss ideas with me, an ordinary graduate student. June McFee's scholarly abilities impressed me, but what inspired me more was the depth of her caring in her role as mentor. She served as a model for me of how a woman academic might function in a world populated by many ambitions and competitive men and women whose primary goals are self-serving.

**Story 2.** Two years ago when I applied for promotion to Full Professor I felt confident that my credentials were in order and the time was right for this promotion. Although, I had been approved unanimously for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor a number of years before, there was at that time some discussion about the nature of my

research that focused on populations not included in normative art education research such as women, artistically talented students, art teachers, and students from diverse backgrounds and settings. The scope of my research incorporated a variety of methodologies, including theoretical analyses, historiography, case studies, and curriculum construction and had a common core that addressed the most humane, equitable, and meaningful ways to teach art to all students.

My naive belief that my position at Indiana University was ungirded, to some extent, by equitable treatment of women in academe was challenged by a School of Education committee's vote. I, and two other School of Education women faculty (both of whom are associate deans of faculties), were denied support for promotion to Full Professorships with identical votes of five to one against such action. My disbelief on learning of the committee's decision turned to anger and that anger turned to action. I learned that articles and books that I had written in collaboration with others were removed from consideration since I was identified as second author of all of them.

Generally, I do not believe in hierarchical listings of names in publications and have been content, in most cases, to be listed last. The five male and one female members on the promotion committee made their own power decisions, ignoring evidence and letters describing my role in these collaborations. The most disarming decisions were the insinuation that I was "junior" author to Gilbert Clark in all articles we co-authored and that I was "second author" in a publication co-authored with Clark and Marilyn Zurmuehlen (one of the few art educators whose surname follows mine in alphabetical order).

My friends and colleagues, both men and women, in art education, gifted and talented education, and women's studies, wrote letters, called deans, and were supportive in countless other ways. Although this story began negatively, it ended positively with the Dean of the School of Education supporting my promotion and that of the other two women. Our promotions were granted immediately across campus, the members of the committee that refused our promotions were reprimanded,

and the committee was dissolved. Although I felt vindicated, I'm much less trusting and will always be on guard, much like the birds I can see gathered around the feeder I see from my study window, feeding, and simultaneously looking for the multi-colored cats that prowl our backyard.

**Story 3.** I have been fortunate to travel to many places that, when I was in grade school, were represented in my geography books as small, blurred, black and white illustrations. I have worked and lectured in Singapore, Israel, Sweden, Hungary, Great Britain, Switzerland, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and in almost all of the United States. I have traveled far from the Bronx, New York.

About seven years ago, as a member of a Fulbright-Hays study group, I traveled for two months in Malawi and Zimbabwe with a dozen higher education faculty and four elementary school teachers from all over Indiana. One day we climbed high into the hills of Malawi, accompanied by a supervisor for natural resources who was anxious for us to view the recently harnessed water supply that flowed to 20 villages throughout the area. Walking on paths cleared by his machete, we finally reached our destination. Then came an arduous climb down to the first village that received water from the source we just had visited. The leaders of the village came to greet us; one was a gray bearded man and the other was a woman my age with a baby on her back. She and I looked at each other and I felt at one with her; I joined those Malawi villagers who were dancing while my Western counterparts looked on from the other side of the road. I danced as though I had known the steps since childhood. I became the Thou, and the Thou became I. These are the connections that bind all people together.

**Story 4.** It was in the Spring, when I was in the fourth grade, and we were encouraged to purchase seeds for one or two cents a package. This exchange of money for seeds was the result of the philanthropy some well intentioned individual who thought that children growing up in the city should learn how to grow plants. After convincing the

local grocer I absolutely needed a wooden box that had once contained farmers' cheese, I filled it with soil and planted a number of sunflower seeds. Three of them flourished, growing as if they were in an open field and not on the window sill of my fourth floor apartment building in the Bronx. The seeds pushed their shoots through the soil and leaves followed as I nurtured the fledgling sunflowers. They stretched and grew and finally flowers burst forth much to the delight of our neighbors on the fifth floor who had a good view of them from their window. All my hard work ended in my experiencing only the new growth while others benefited more fully from the mature bloom.

Story 5 related to Story 4. A few years ago, the Dali Lama spoke at IU and I was fortunate to be able to attend his lecture. He posed a simple question to the audience. "What profession is valued most in the world today?" His answer, "the teaching profession." I have been teaching since I was 20 years old and a graduate of City College in New York City where I had a fellowship to teach art history at a branch campus in lower Manhattan. After two years teaching art history, I became an art specialist in the New York City public schools, where for almost a decade, I taught art in inner city neighborhoods of the East Bronx, Lower Eastside in Manhattan, and Bedford Styvesant in Brooklyn. I also established and taught in my own art school in Ithaca, New York and have taught in the Art Education Program at Indiana University for more than two decades. I have been teaching, therefore, most of my adult life except for a few years before and after the birth of my daughter, 26 years ago, and my son, 23 years ago. As the years have passed, I have come to value my present role, a teacher of teachers, as a very important one through which I can affect others' lives by empowering them and challenging them to be creative inquirers and problem solvers, to use art to confront social issues and understand peoples from a variety of cultures and contexts, and to believe they can transform their own lives and those of their students. As a female in the time and culture in which I grew up, I was taught to be modest and not focus on my own accomplishments. Compliments often were met with denial. Now that I am fifty plus, at this stage

in my career, I am comfortable presenting some of the following quotations from students I taught during this past year, 1992. These comments were taken from their stored places in the gray file cabinet described by my daughter:

- Enid Zimmerman - consistency, competency, energy. Emphasis on Art. Teaching by doing. Lifestyle as a woman and art educator.

I felt challenged and stimulated (and frustrated at times) which was very rewarding. The course was thought provoking and stimulating. It caused reevaluation of myself and my teaching methods.

This was the first women's studies class I have been involved in during my entire life! It was a wonderful experience. The classroom interaction was one of respect, comfort, understanding, and cooperation. A male undergraduate student wrote the following:

Sometimes you seemed almost like a second mother as you listened as I talked of my life. Thanks for the moments in class and outside of class and for listening to me. This excerpt is from a letter penned by a former student five years after she had attended a two week residential summer program for junior high art students that I coordinated:

Thank you for all you added to my life in just those two week sessions during the summers of my youth. You made the difference that made the difference. I recently received a letter from a teacher that ended with the following observation: concentration has been in finding and exercising my authentic voice. In this you have been an inspiration. My life feels richer for the brief time we spent together and the stories and self you shared. I feel humbled, yet proud, to be reading these comments from students whose lives I have touched in such important and meaningful ways. I have learned to become a more sensitive teacher from all these students and teachers whose lives and deeds influenced my own. Many friends and colleagues in the field of art education also have inspired me in my roles as scholar and teacher. I am grateful to my mentors Mary Rouse and Elizabeth Steiner, my colleague at Indiana University, Guy Hubbard, Mary Stokrocki who nominated me for this award, and Georgia Collins, Virginia

Fitzpatrick, Deborah Smith-Shank, and Marilyn Zurmuehlen who wrote letters of support. Also, I would like to acknowledge Women's Caucus members Renee Sandell, Amy Brook Snider, Hilda Present Lewis, and Karen Hamblen who have been personal and professional friends. Many other art educators, many of whom are sitting in the audience, and my past and present students and colleagues at Indiana University. Most of all I extend my deepest gratitude to my friend, colleague, and husband, Gilbert Clark, without whose love and support my accomplishments might never have reached fruition. He serves as a major conduit between my extraordinary and ordinary lives.

**The last story.** I am the oldest of two daughters, first generation American on my father's side and second on my mother's. I grew up in the West Bronx in New York City. Last year, after 30 years of being away from where we grew up, a childhood friend and I went back to the neighborhood where we spent our childhoods. When we lived there, working class Jewish and Irish families populated the apartment buildings; today the same buildings are occupied by Puerto Rican and Afro-American working class families. Thirty years' wear was evident everywhere, but in essence, I felt, these changes were minimal and I was impressed by how little the neighborhood had really changed. I called my sister to tell her about my revelations, but she responded that she had visited that same old neighborhood a few years ago and she thought everything had changed and there was little remaining of the neighborhood of our youth.

Events such as births, illnesses, barmitzvahs, weddings, and funerals have punctuated my life in endless cycles of joys and sorrows. I have been blessed to have two wonderful children and survived being in an iron lung as an eight year old and being widowed at 35 and left with two very young children. Each day, I continue to remold my life with the support of my family, friends, and colleagues, 10 all who have been essential parts of my ordinary life.

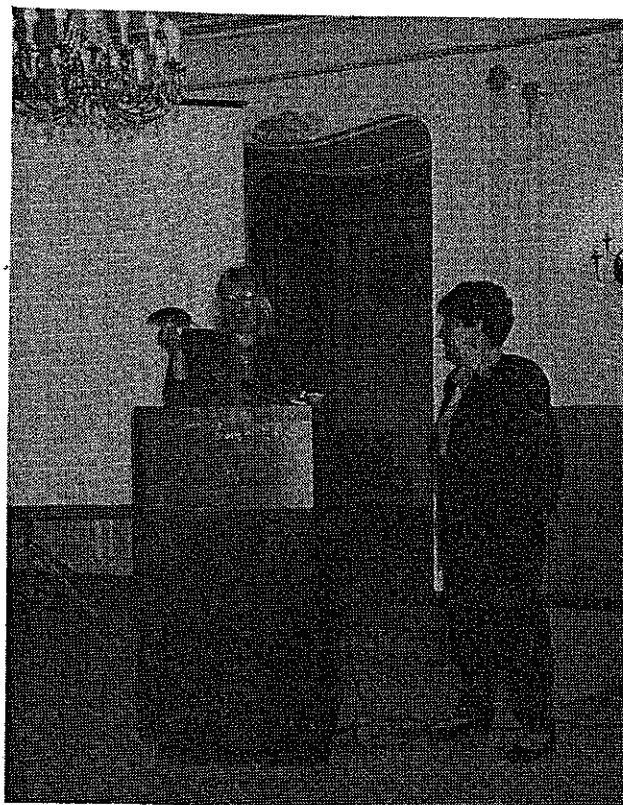
Last week Maxine Greene received an honorary degree from the School of Education at Indiana University. For this occasion, she gave a public

lecture in which she spoke about "Knowing your lived placed in the world" and the need to tell stories artfully about the "multiplicity of our lives through moving communications." As communicators, we all need to extend our lived realities and bring them into our research, our writings, and our classrooms so that we can transform the lives of those with whom we share our public and private and our ordinary and extraordinary lives and spaces. As Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) has written in Writing: A Woman's Life

*What matters is that lives do not serve as models; only stories do that... we live our lives through texts. . . whatever their form or medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must do to make new fictions, new narratives. (p. 37)*



Reference: Heilbrun, C.G. (1988). Writing: A Woman's Life. New York: Ballantine Books.



Debbie Shank-Smith presents Enid Zimmerman with an object which needs explanation.