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October/November 2020

## Go to Your Room!

Despite guest speakers, COVID protocols in place, a high desert ranch location to treasure, and an amazing cohort of writers signed up from across the Northwest, Mother Nature had the final say, which lately seems to be: “Go to your room and stay there!” Due to wildfires and hazardous levels of smoke in the high desert (Brattain, Two Four Two) and in the Willamette National Forest, the “Finding Solid Ground” retreat at the Yamsi Ranch outside of Chiloquin was cancelled. It was a very hard call but the right one at the time.



But there's good news, assuming Mother Nature cooperates. The eleventh annual “Writing Down the Baja” writing retreat in Todos Santos, BCS, Mexico, is a go! Based on feedback from last year’s retreat participants, an extra day has been added to the week, resulting in **seven full days** of workshops and writing. The 2021 dates are February 20 – 28, 2021. All participants will be lodged in single rooms, unless a couple. More detailed information is available at [www.writingranch.com](http://www.writingranch.com).

Congratulations to **Serendipity**, the boutique hotel where the Writing Ranch retreats are held, for receiving the *PuntoLimpio* (Clean Point) designation from the Tourism Ministry of Mexico. Valid for two years, the designation is earned by establishments that meet government hygiene standards following a two-month course. Those standards include a long list of protocols, COVID-related facility improvements, cleaning practices, food preparation and serving guidelines, and so on.



Sharon Morris, the proprietor of Serendipity, and I are as confident as one can be during these times that the February retreat will take place. I hope to see you there, including as many of the Yamsi cohort who are able to pivot to this opportunity. Here's to making up lost ground and finding solid ground on the desert of the Baja! For information visit [www.writingranch.com](http://www.writingranch.com) — Ellen Waterston, Founder, Writing Ranch

## Enough with



To Do's...  
Let's Go to  
Todos!

## Hot Off the Press!

Congratulations to the writers in the “Stencils” workshop at the 2020 Fishtrap Summer Gathering: Yasodha Gopal, Gwendolyn Morgan Christen Pagett, A.E. Swaney, Alex Williard and Kathryn Graves Yoder. Their fine writings are on display in *Defending Home*, a limited-edition anthology published by the Writing Ranch's Deep Seat, Loose Rein Press.



## The Nature of Isolation Online Now!



Ellen Waterston's poem, "Looking for God in All the Wrong Places," will be included in an upcoming online anthology. The Spring Creek Project for Ideas, Nature and the Written Word at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon has assembled a collection of writing and visual art that "explore home ecosystems and reflect on the nature of isolation during the pandemic." The exhibit and anthology will be shared in a series of Zoom events throughout the month of October. [View the posts here.](#)

## Must See

"Public Trust," released in late September on YouTube, is a must see. Produced by Robert Redford and Yvon Chouinard, the documentary is a film about the fight to save America's public lands. [Click here to view the film.](#)



The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof. — Barbara Kingsolver

## Getting the Word Out!

Enjoy two conversations between Ellen Waterston and Susanne Mueller, global business coach, from her blog, “Take It From the Iron Woman.”

[Link to Walking the High Desert conversation](#)

[Link to Do You Have All It Takes conversation](#)



Tune into Ellen’s interview with Alan Chartock on **Roundtable**, a program of NPR station WAMC of Albany, New York. [Visit the WAMC website here to listen to the interview.](#)

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## October is the New December...

This according to Tom Beans, owner of [Dudley’s Bookshop Café](#) in Bend, Oregon. He explains that due to a nationwide paper shortage, fewer book printers, and the log jam of new titles in the queue, the books you plan on giving as gifts during the holidays should be ordered at your local bookstore this month.

If you can’t go to your local bookstore in person, visit [www.bookshop.org](http://www.bookshop.org), scroll for your favorite shop and place your order. Unlike Amazon, Bookshop is an online bookstore that financially supports independent bookstores and gives back to the book community.

## Roundup's "Writing for Real"


### Prompt:

#### Current Events Crazy Quilt

How can we express the turmoil all that is taking place is creating? Here's one way to start. On the left side of a piece of paper write 20 random verbs. On the right side, list twenty nouns related to a specific current event or situation (racism, COVID, voting). Combine as many as possible from both columns juxtaposing unlikely combinations for a crazy quilt poem.

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## Legacy Planning for the Waterston Desert Writing Prize

 September 17, 2020 was a big day for the Waterston Desert Writing Prize. At the virtual sixth annual awards ceremony not only were the overall Prize winner, the two finalists and the inaugural student essay winner recognized, but also the High Desert Museum, Central Oregon's renowned natural and cultural history museum, made official its adoption of the Waterston Desert Writing Prize!

The mission and goals of the Prize complement those of the High Desert Museum, emphasizing the importance of protecting deserts and creating important conversations about the issues affecting them. This adoption will acquaint a larger literary audience with the Prize, which awards book proposals that address the vital role deserts play worldwide as ecosystems and in the human

narrative.

### **Readings by Winners and Finalists on YouTube**

A reading was given by the 2020 Prize recipient, Hannah Hindley, of Tucson, Arizona, for her winning book proposal, “Thin Blue Dream,” a collection of interconnected stories that explore the Sonoran Desert’s disappearing urban waterways. Prize finalists Eli Beck, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Leath Tonino, Ferrisburgh, Vermont, also read from their proposals. Beck was recognized for his submission “Rude Awakenings,” an examination of wilderness therapy programs in the Four Corners region of New Mexico. Tonino submitted “Nooks and Crannies: Mapping the (Unmappable) Waterpocket Fold with Prose Vignettes,” a documentation of his experiences in Capitol Reef National Park.



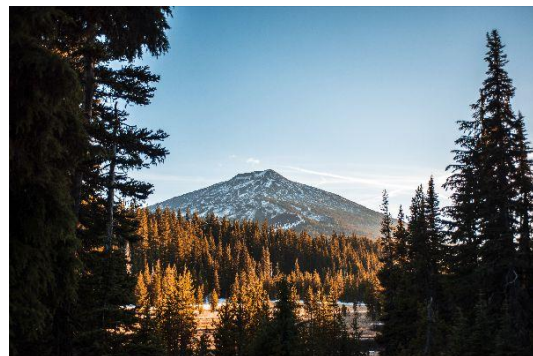
Hannah Hindley

Al Lehto’s essay, the winner of the inaugural student essay writing competition, reflects on the many hours their artist mother spent painting in the Oregon Badlands Wilderness east of Bend, and the times they would join her. To listen to the entire program and readings, [visit the High Desert Museum YouTube channel](#).

## **WOMEN** **Writing the West**

"Mosaic: Piecing Things Together in Life and Writing"

Women Writing the West Virtual  
26th Annual Conference



Mapping Memoir: A Writing Intensive

October 15-18, 2020

Join me online in "Mosaic: Piecing Things Together in Life and Writing." Together, we'll examine examples of the "mosaic" by well-known authors as an effective way to achieve heightened impact in one's writing. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

December 4-5, 2020

Have a memoir in mind or one started? Enroll in the Writing Ranch's "The Story You Came To Tell," December 4-5, in Bend, Oregon to stake out your ideas and create a road map for your story. Benefit from exercises and craft talks that will hone your memoir-writing skills. Workshop sessions will be held at the Sunrise Village clubhouse, located on a ponderosa pine-covered ridge with beautiful views of the Cascades, a peaceful location perfect for a two-day intensive retreat. Visit [www.writingranch.com](http://www.writingranch.com) to register.

## What Can I Do?



The poem below from *Vía Lactéa* bears repeating during COVID. Too much isolation is not a good thing. What are some ways you stay in communion with others while sequestering? As winter approaches we'll all benefit from each other's ideas. Please visit the [Writing Ranch website](#) and send in your suggestions.

### **Dream Catcher**

by  
Ellen Waterston

## Butt in Chair: COVID-19 Special Discounts

Visit the [Writing Ranch website](#) for special offers on Manuscript Lab and one-on-ones.



About Ellen Waterston

I eat standing up because I am about to be on my way somewhere. I just know it. I don't sit. The music hasn't stopped, not yet. And anyway, there's only one chair and I am the only one here. I line up *Self, Time, Fortune, Vanity Fair* edge to edge, tuck hospital corners on the bed, straighten the Oriental rug—measures of order to tighten the weave, to increase the chances of a good thing catching.

What have I already told you?  
That life has more meaning  
now that I know it doesn't  
than when I thought it did?  
Of course, I love life whenever  
I can. Or I will. I swear it. Meanwhile  
I'll make sure my fork touches  
my plate politely. No haste, clatter,  
no shove, no scrape—telling  
of one who eats alone.

*Vía Lactéa: A Woman of a Certain Age  
Walks the Camino*  
Atelier 6000  
[Order here](#)

*Walking the High Desert,  
Encounters with Rural America  
Along the Oregon Desert Trail*, is  
Waterston's third nonfiction title.  
She has also published four  
collections of poetry. She founded  
the [Writing Ranch](#) in 2000 to  
support the craft and careers of  
writers through workshops and  
retreats. Waterston is founder of the  
[Waterston Desert Writing Prize](#).

For more information about Ellen  
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