



The Ellen Meloy Fund for Desert Writers

Dedicated to the memory and legacy of writer, artist and naturalist Ellen Meloy (1946-2004)

Ellen Lives on Through Her Writings

Ellen never was far from her journal. At home, on the road, on the river, or simply outdoors, she regularly recorded her thoughts and the things she discovered. She sketched out her experiences and impressions of the places she inhabited and those she visited. Below is an unpublished portion of her journal entry from a past October.

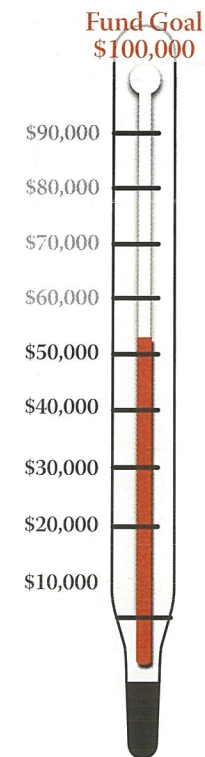
*Day 9, Grand Canyon Arizona
 October 21, 1990*

I have other memories this morning – they flood in without invitation and some wash over me with startling warmth. On the fringe is that worry – the lack of resolution, the not knowing what to expect or how to communicate or where to place all this strange part of my summer. Restless! It never tucks in neatly, I'm forever fretting and trying to understand. A night on Cedar Mesa – three long weeks ago? a month? – both pacified it and turned it on its ear. I read the words and thoughts like turning pearls through my fingers. I know what I feel; it's the

vacuum on the other side that hurts and causes this occasional disturbance in the field. This is the ideal place to think about it – between the walls of an enormous canyon and hurling slowly through time on a moving ribbon of water. Sweet memories, hunger, wonder, hope and absurd humor... this place seems to allow all my emotions to settle into a peaceful resolution ... and that's what beauty is – two edges: incredible solace and ecstasy and unadulterated fear. 📖

Fund Achieves Over 50% of Goal

by Mark Meloy, Executive Director



The board of the Ellen Meloy Fund would like to extend our sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the start-up of this legacy to Ellen and her inspiration. The Fund's purpose is simply stated: to raise funds and make awards to writers to write about the desert, from the desert. Pro-

posals are reviewed by a committee of peers and Fund board of directors. The Fund has raised more than \$50,000 in the past two years. We have set a goal of raising \$100,000; this capital base would provide an annual sustainable yield of \$3,000 to \$5,000, which would be applied to publicizing the Fund and increasing awards. Our fundraising efforts and successes have come through personal appeal to friends and relatives, and we currently are proud to count over 130 close friends of Ellen's as donors. Word of mouth is still our strongest

asset, and we continue to ask everyone to spread the word about the Fund and its mission. We have recently received our non-profit documentation from the IRS, and all gifts are tax-deductible. We hope you will consider an additional donation and an ongoing financial commitment to Ellen's legacy. If you chose to help us reach our goal of \$100,000, please send your donation in the enclosed envelope today. Every dollar is greatly appreciated and will be used to support the Ellen Meloy Fund's mission. 📖

Inaugural Award Presented to Rebecca Lawton

In Spring 2006, Rebecca Lawton became the recipient of the Ellen Meloy Fund's first annual writer's award. Along with that recognition, Rebecca received a grant of \$1,000 in support of her project *Oil and Water*. Set in the Uintah Basin of Utah, *Oil and Water* examines perceptions of home through the eyes of river runners, oil field workers, cowhands, farmers and other area inhabitants. The Fund's Award Committee chose Lawton from among 14 applicants. Recognizing her intention, hard work and talent, Ann Weiler

Walka, committee chair, said "Rebecca Lawton writes about the desert with wit and imagination and a deep particularity rooted in years of back-country work as a geologist and river runner." Lawton's collection of essays, *Reading Water* (2002) clearly embody Ellen Meloy's gift for writing. The Fund Board con-

gratulates Rebecca and wishes her every success in her new project. As
(continued on page 2)

Award Applications for 2007

Due December 31, 2006

Deadline for the 2007 award applicants is December 31, 2006. Word of mouth remains our best avenue for attracting qualified writers. Please direct interested applicants to the Ellen Meloy Fund for Desert Writers Web site—www.ellenmeloy.com—where application information is available. 📖



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for Desert Writers**

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memory and legacy
of writer, artist and
naturalist Ellen Meloy
(1946-2004)

The Ellen Meloy Fund for
Desert Writers provides
support to writers whose
work reflects the spirit
and passions embodied
in Ellen's writing and her
commitment to a deep
map of place.

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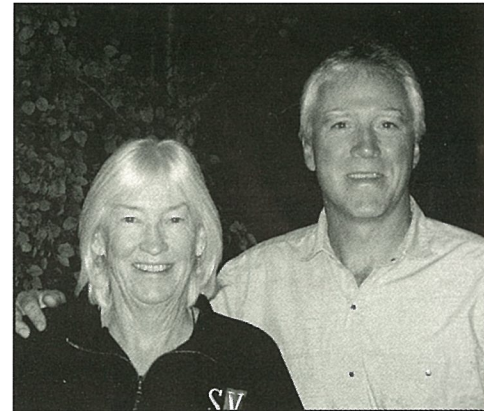
Message from the Ellen Meloy Fund Co-Chairs

by Tony Jewett & Joan Miles

It's been two years since Ellen passed on, and for those of us who were so fortunate to enjoy her friendship our lives remains richer from the memory of her laughter, her humor, her genius and the warmth of her self.

Today was a good day to remember Ellen. We hiked up Mt. Helena with a crisp seasonal bite in the clear blue-sky September air. A few hardy flowers still clung to the hillside and a few golden and red hues predicted the beginning of the upcoming blast of fall colors. It was the kind of day that was definitive and exciting in its announcement of a change in the seasons. We laughed as we considered that Ellen would have celebrated this glorious bright day even while making plans to hightail it south and get away from the infernal, creeping Montana cold.

Ellen left us so much through her writings and in this newsletter you will see an unpublished excerpt from some of her notes. It is a wonderful gift to have someone live on through their writings, and at its core is the motiva-



Joan Miles and Tony Jewett

tion for establishing the Ellen Meloy Fund for Desert Writers. We hope you enjoy this newsletter providing updates on the fund, the acknowledgements awarded to Ellen for her final book, *Eating Stone*, and news about the first recipient of the Desert Writers award, Rebecca Lawton.

Your continued support of the Ellen Meloy Fund is critical to sustaining her legacy and achieving our mission of assisting writers who share Ellen's passion for the desert. We hope you will consider honoring Ellen – and keeping her spirit alive – by renewing your contribution to the Fund. 📱

Inaugural Award, continued from page 1

she embarks on the new project Lawton reflected on being honored by the Fund:

"I've always thought that if just one person cheers a writer on, she'll flourish. I've imagined she thrives exponentially better with the addition of each person to her team. Those who chose to honor me with the first annual Ellen Meloy Fund for Desert Writers' Award have done me this favor

– they've brought a team of support to my work. In doing so, Ellen's fund has given my writing life new energy. The award resurrected *Oil and Water*, a desert project that had been hiding for years in a manila folder. When the fund believed in me, I believed in myself.... Through the fund, Ellen is still a positive force for change in our world. I am grateful to have been the inaugural honoree." 📱

Eating Stone Recognized for Literary Excellence

In January, *Eating Stone*, the book Ellen had just finished before she died, was nominated for the prestigious National Book Critics Circle Award – an honor Ellen shared with the likes of E. L. Doctorow, John Updike, Joan Didion and other literary lion nominees. Among five finalists for non-fiction who appeared at the New York reception, Ellen's brother and Fund board member Grant Ditzler appeared on public television reading from *Eating Stone*. Grant remembers, "I chose a humorous passage that really enlivened an otherwise rather somber event. Ellen's wit stood out like a bright star in the night sky over Manhattan Island." While her book did not win the award, the recognition gained her talent huge exposure.

In April, the John Burroughs Association of the American Museum of Natural History awarded Ellen an Honorary Certificate of Recognition. The Association has recognized the talent of naturalists since 1926 along with all the classics of natural history, including the work of Ernest Thompson Seton, Aldo Leopold, Adolph Murie, John McPhee, Peter Matthiessen and Barry Lopez. Past recipient Jan Deblieu praised Ellen's

work and accepted the award on her behalf at an Association luncheon in New York.

In May, *Eating Stone* received the 2006 Utah Book Award for non-fiction. Fund board member Greer Cheshier read from the book and accepted the honor at an awards ceremony in Saint George, Utah. Greer later reflected on the event, "I was very happy to be there, but I certainly wished it was she rather than me who read those amazing words."

Since its publication in fall 2005, *Eating Stone* has been celebrated at readings throughout the country, including Bellingham-WA, Portland-OR, Salt Lake City-UT, Seattle, New York City, Helena-MT, San Francisco-CA, Walla Walla-WA, Jackson-WY, Mancos-CO, Blanding-UT and Flagstaff-AZ. We thank the numerous old friends and close colleagues of Ellen who gave their time to provide these public readings. 📱

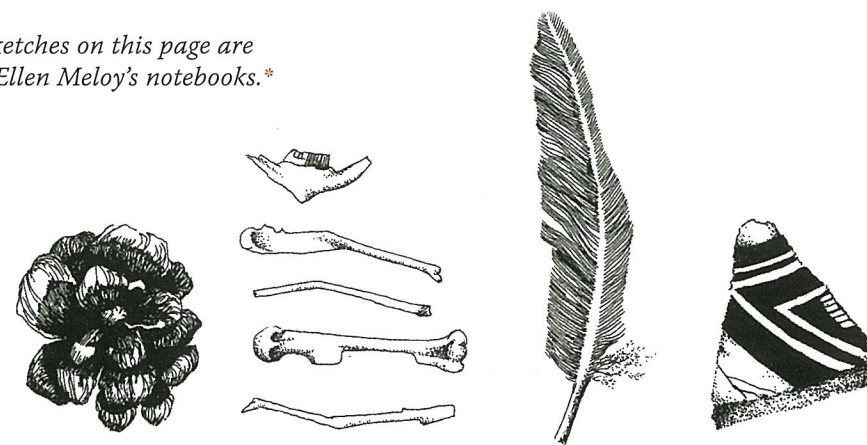


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The encouragement
of a single writer is
important, but
Ellen's Fund brings
even more to the
world. It reaches into
the well of humanity
and waters souls. In
giving life to projects
that speak for the
desert and its people,
the Fund passes forward
the baton of advocacy
for this wordless
landscape. At a
time when our very
lives depend on how
we care for the planet,
nothing could be more
important than giving
voice to the desert.

Through the Fund,
Ellen is still a positive
force for change in
our world.

—Rebecca Lawton
1st Recipient, Ellen Meloy Fund
for Desert Writer's Award.

The sketches on this page are
from Ellen Meloy's notebooks.*



• PINYON CONE • BONES OF A SMALL MAMMAL • FEATHER • ANASAZI POTSDHERD •

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