

WRITING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

She was right. It had specific details to get you started. A setting to ground you. And a mystery — who left the suitcase and why?

So after the group settled in, I challenged them: Let's write about the suitcase by the side of the road.

The responses — fiction, lyrical description, mystery — were extraordinary. It continues to amaze me how a single image or phrase can set writers moving in completely different directions — all interesting, all compelling, all worth reading.

Here are the opening words of some of the class stories, each revealing the special genius of a writer's creative voice. I challenge you to write your own response to this prompt. Or check the sidebar for more summer writing inspiration.

THE SUITCASE BESIDE THE ROAD (EXCERPT)

© 2013 by Ann Cockrell

A suitcase lay in the ditch beside the road. Fern couldn't just drive by for two reasons. The first was the Saint Patrick's Day green ribbon tied to the suitcase handle — hard to miss that. The second was that it was at the end of her driveway, a long rocky dirt road that led to her house out of sight from where it ended on a paved county road. She would have to drive by it every day. Technically, the suitcase was in the ditch on county road property. She knew that the green ribbon would fade and whatever was inside the little suitcase would rot before the county cleaned it up...

SUITCASE TIED WITH A GREEN RIBBON (EXCERPT)

© 2013 by Mary Law Meinelt

The chase began when the old white car covered with mud streaked through the one red light on Main Street of the small town of Ash, North Carolina. Rob Dennis was relaxing in his patrol car on this lazy spring day while keeping an eye out for any criminal activity — usually no

Summer Writing Camp

You can create your own private Summer Writing Camp at home. Take your morning coffee out on the deck, along with your journal and pen, and write for 15 minutes each morning.

Here are a few fun prompts to get you started. Rules: Jump in, write messy, go whatever direction suits you, write for more minutes if you can't stop writing!

- My Rotten Summer Job
- A Day I Got in Trouble Because of Water
- Learning to Swim, Trying not to Drown
- 15 Things to Eat when It's Too Hot
- What to Bring on a Trip to the Beach

Post your writing as a comment on my blog, <http://kitchentablewriters.wordpress.com>. To join a Kitchen Table Writers Workshop, see www.kitchentablewriters.wordpress.com



more than someone driving five miles over the speed limit. Rob loved this small town where he grew up and knew just about everyone by their first name.

THE GREEN SUITCASE (EXCERPT)

© 2013 by M.B. Copeland

She waited until he was asleep and then moved away from him, inch by inch, until she was almost sitting up at the edge of the bed. She held her breath, waiting to see if he stirred. When he didn't, she gently lifted the covers enough to get her feet clear and then slowly, slowly managed to stand.

She didn't dare turn on a light as she moved quickly in her bare feet toward the front door. Getting it open was going to be tricky. She had carefully oiled the hinges the day before, opening and shutting it over and over until she was sure it wouldn't creak. The problem was that when it was opened quickly, the change in air pressure sometimes made the bedroom window jar in its frame. To avoid this, she had practiced opening the door slowly, bit by bit. Now she tried to steady her nerves so that her trembling hands wouldn't jerk it open more than a tiny distance at a time.

THE GREEN SUITCASE (EXCERPT)

© 2013 by Pat Ryan

I've got an old jalopy '91 Lincoln that I drive back and forth to work at Sherwin Williams on the far south side of Chicago. It's far enough south that there's open land starting at about 103rd Street and extending past the Illinois/Indiana border.

It's about a half an hour drive and I keep my eyes peeled for anything of interest along the way. There's a lot of junk along the road. Tires which prompt my wondering about why. An accident? Was anyone hurt? No way to know.

Sometimes I see men around a small open fire, huddled...

THE LOST SUITCASE (EXCERPT)

© 2013 by Clementine Tran

Far from Vegas, a cobalt sky blankets the desert as the endless barren road parts the coarse sand. One rugged tumbleweed stops rolling over itself to find momentarily rest on a foreign burnt sienna suitcase. Under the phallic cactus, the exotic object idly rests with a celadon ribbon dancing in the wind. The satin strip of material anchors onto the leather post handle as it continues to let the sun adore and salute its shimmers...

Chatham writer Marjorie Hudson is the award-winning author of "Accidental Birds of the Carolinas" (stories about newcomers in rural North Carolina) and "Searching for Virginia Dare," a personal exploration of the fate of the Lost Colony of Roanoke Island, now available in a new, updated edition. In addition to running Kitchen Table Writers Workshops, she is a core instructor at the CCCC Creative Writing Certificate Program.

Farm profile and invitation to a feast

by Adrienne Bashista

Farrell Moose had just finished his MFA in painting, but a fateful and fortuitous visit with his wife-to-be, Emily Lancaster, who was then enrolled in the Sustainable Agriculture program at CCCC's Pittsboro campus, changed all of that. "She was interning with Doug Jones at the Piedmont Biofarm and it was a revelation to me. I fell in love with what she was doing. I decided I wanted to do it, too." Add in an visit with the late farmer, Bill Dow, at Ayrshire Farm, the first organic-certified farm in North Carolina, and his fate was sealed. Dutch Buffalo Farm, Farrell and Emily's sustainable vegetable farm, was the result.

Named after a creek on his family's farm in Cabarrus county, Dutch Buffalo Farm is small, but growing. They run a CSA and are founding members of the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market. "We chose Chatham County for a couple of reasons," Farrell explains. "First was because Emily was here, of course, and the visit to Bill Dow's farm was inspirational. Dutch Buffalo is actually right down the road from Ayrshire Farm. But Chatham County has lots of resources for farmers." Farrell mentions Debbie Roos and her support of sustainable farming through the North Carolina Co-op extension and the Sustainable Agriculture program at the community college as two great resources, but is clear that the customer base that is a huge resource for their farm. "Folks come and buy what we're selling. There's a clear value to sustainably raised, small-farm produced produce in this community. Connection to the community is everything."

Brandon Cox, the head chef and founder of Oakleaf Restaurant, would agree. He's a regular at the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market: he and his sous-chefs are early morning regulars, often buying large quantities from the vendors. He'll buy asparagus from one, mushrooms from another, lettuce and greens from yet another. "Having the farmers' market out here on the lawn is awesome," he says. "It connects the farmers and the food to the restaurant, and the community that comes out to the market is the number one reason why we started having Saturday brunch at Oakleaf." Cox uses food purchased from the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market on Saturdays to craft his Saturday specials, and many of the farmers names show up on their regular menu, connected to dishes inspired by fresh produce.

"I'm spoiled with the market right here," Cox says. "It doesn't get any closer to farm to fork than this."

Oakleaf, The Abundance Foundation, and the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market are teaming up to bring the farm to fork at a special event on July 14 at the 2nd annual Harvest Abundance party. Chef Cox will use fresh, local items from the market's vendors to create an inventive menu

of heavy hors d'oeuvres. A wide variety of items and experiences have been donated by local artisans and businesses and they'll be available through a raffle and a live auction. Local musicians, including Carrboro-based The Bucket Brothers, will entertain the crowd. Tickets are available at the Farmers' Market on

Saturdays, through the Abundance website, and at the door of the event.

One of Adrienne Bashista's many hats is manager of the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market: chathamillsfarmersmarket.com. You can contact her at cmfmanager@gmail.com.

Emily and Farrell Moose on their farm.

PHOTO BY DEBBIE ROOS,
NORTH CAROLINA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

