

What We Have by Jeana Edelman

An introduction to Write Around Portland's Spring 2011 anthology *Still the Days Grow Longer*



A practicing studio artist for 30 years, a writer, entrepreneur and business owner, Jeana Edelman is at ease in art and commerce, but most importantly, in collaboration with others. Jeana works on visual art and writing concurrently with co-owning and managing a 27-year-old legendary Portland company. At [HOTLIPS Pizza + Soda](#), she creates all visual and written material, and manages the aesthetic development of the brand. While her studies and media have been primarily painting and drawing, in 2003 photography became her dominant choice for visual artwork.

HOTLIPS Pizza + Soda generously hosts twice-monthly community writing workshops with Write Around Portland at their SE Hawthorne location. For more information about these workshops, go to <http://www.writearound.org/events/events.html>

Every single one of you, each who has written, who has read, listened, arrived nervous in the morning and gone to bed with a new light, a flame, a small or large fire, inside the cave of yourself at night. You now know what can happen when some very nice people coax a few words out of you, surround you with ears, eyes and gentle souls lay out stones and make a space safe and warm for you and your new friends.

Garden rows await planting with thought seeds or even just droplets of dew. Sounds of little and big things, tales of yesterday, this morning, of many years ago, a cup of coffee and the smell of kitchens, of ovens and barns, of bayside wood planks and damp thick wool drying slowly by a fire inside a small cabin as a deep dark spreads in all directions outside and night creatures begin to move around.

Firelight and the sound of sparking, sputtering embers cast a spell across the small group gathered here. The stories begin to come out, connecting us like suction cups. Tendrils of language twist and bind, holding us up and catching in its sure web any wobbly voices at the table. Here we are, together writing and sharing words, embraced by Write Around Portland once more or for the first time. We are never to be the same again, on our way to being better than we were yesterday, to having more friends than we did this morning, seeing that our stories have a busy life, tucked inside a sticky hive with others.

While every single person here, in this anthology and in the light shed by our writing, each of us knows how fortunate we are to have found our way to Write Around Portland. Even so, I feel like the luckiest person in the entire universe. The longest-running writing workshop ever occurs twice a month in the heart of my family's business, around a big cobbled-together table at HOTLIPS Pizza on Hawthorne Boulevard. It began Valentine's Day morning, 2008, with Kim Stafford leading us into the forest of words and ideas. Though now, over three years later, we are settled into a routine of sorts - the setting up of tables, the herding of chairs - still every time, two times every month, it's a surprise as the small group of souls wriggle and wrestle into place, say our names, and begin to scratch on paper. No matter what unfurls, we stay put in our chairs and we write some more. Without this time we might just be wandering around, not yet up in the morning or still staring at the same crack in the wall, hearing only our own chirping and banging, and no new friends in sight. But it's not that way. We have this.