



# The Herstory Chronicles

Newsletter of the Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan

January 2018

## Book Group shares lively conversation

The October WHP book group enjoyed a lively discussion of the book, "The Bitch Is Back: Older, Wiser and (Getting) Happier," by Cathi Hanauer. It's a collection of essays in which a variety of middle-aged women share thoughts, feelings about aging, risking, accepting, loving. We agreed there are things for everyone to like (and dislike) in the book that challenges many of our assumptions.

Member Anne Magoun found several ideas worth keeping, including the need to accept aging, to know thyself, be present in the moment, to embrace change, and let go of what other people think. (See Book Group on p. 6)

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## Women's History Project Souper Sunday

February 4, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

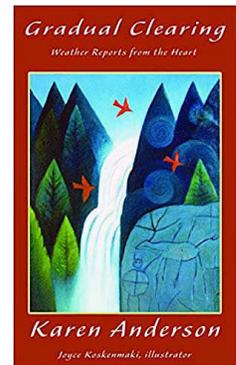
\$5 donation

Hearty lunch of soup, bread and dessert catered by Centre Street Café

McGuire Room of the Traverse Area District Library  
610 Woodmere Avenue

## Speaker: Karen Anderson, Interlochen Public Radio author of "Gradual Clearing: Weather Reports from the Heart"

Karen will share her writing journey and read some essays from new her book. There are 120 essays in this illustrated volume. The short, poetic essays feature pen-and-ink drawings by Joyce Koskenmaki, a nationally recognized artist from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. (See page 2 for more about Karen.)



The WHP Souper Sunday is an annual event for the public, featuring camaraderie, a casual and delicious soup luncheon, and a thought-provoking program.

Reservations are required (so we don't run out of soup!) by Wednesday, January 31, to Sandy Seppala Gyr: 421-3343, 703-597-7925 (preferred) or sansep19@earthlink.net.

*The Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan began in 2000 with the goal of preserving and recognizing the contributions of women to their families and communities in northwest-lower Michigan.*

## A prosperous year is ahead

By Amy Barritt

We hope our members will be pleased to know we are operating as normal, presenting excellent programs like October's Annual Meeting (which you can read more about in this newsletter) and capturing oral histories. But, what we really would like to know is, how can we serve you better? What piques your collective interest in women's history?

Whatever ideas your passion sparks, keep the Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan in mind. We are always hard at work meeting our mission to preserve and recognize the contributions of our women neighbors. Our action plan retains many of the same elements as when we started in 2000, especially by continuing the oral history program. Though our organization continues to be successful in its mission, we are always looking for ways to build. Perhaps you have a skill underutilized and are looking to start something great. Or, you are looking to support an organization that focuses on women and their strengths.

2018 is going to be a prosperous year for the WHP, and we hope you'll choose to be an active part of it! Let us know if you would like to interview women of wisdom in our communities, or if you have a recommendation for someone we should interview.

Also, please consider joining the Board of Directors. We are always looking for new ideas to explore that meet our mission. Please contact me at any time, [abarritt@tadl.org](mailto:abarritt@tadl.org), 570-0749.



### Board of Directors

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### WHPNM Mission

To preserve and recognize the contributions of women to their families and communities in northwest lower Michigan.

### Who is Karen Anderson?

Karen Anderson is a writer who lives and works in Traverse City, Michigan.

She wrote a weekly column in the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* for 30 years and published two collections, "Letters from Karen" and "A Common Journey."

Since 2005, she has contributed weekly essays to Interlochen Public Radio. An illustrated collection of her essays was published in 2017, "Gradual Clearing: Weather Reports from the Heart."

Karen has a Master's degree in English Literature from the

University of Michigan and is retired from Northwestern Michigan College where she was director of marketing and public relations.

Karen was a long-time board member of the Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan, having finished her tenure in October 2017. She also is co-chair of the WHP Book Group.

She enjoys camping, canoeing, reading, writing, listening, learning.



Send articles and announcements for the September newsletter to Sandy, [sansep19@earthlink.net](mailto:sansep19@earthlink.net), or contact her at 421-3343. Next deadline is August 17. Those accepted are subject to editing for length and content.

## ‘She’

Her nametag at our annual meeting read, ‘Linda Woods, Guest Speaker.’ Linda is an Anishinabek Elder, a U.S. Air Force veteran, a member of the Michigan Hall of Fame, and the first female Eagle Staff Carrier; but she is not ‘She.’

‘She’ is Mash-ka-wizid-ode’-ogitchidaw-kwe, the Eagle Staff carried by glass-ceiling-breaker, Linda Woods. “The eagle (Migizi) is part of our Anishinabek creation story,” Woods explains. “It flies so high that it takes our messages to The Creator. Eagles are so revered by the Anishinabek that an Eagle Staff is considered to be our flag.

“Male veterans have always led the procession dance into a Pow-Wow as honored warriors who served to protect our land. They carry staffs crowned with the head of their revered warrior, the eagle. Second in the procession dance are veterans carrying their tribal flag—only if the Pow-Wow is on tribal land—followed by veterans carrying the U.S. flag.

“Our ceremonies and way of life are based on the values of respect, bravery, love, wisdom, and truth. We step into the Procession Dance at Pow-Wows as the Circle of Life on the Medicine Wheel. We enter through the East as a child, move South, West, and finally North in the elder part of our journey of Life.

“At seventy-four years of age, I’m a Mindimoyehn, old lady, a person who holds our families and community together. As a procession dancer, I always wondered why there were no Eagle Staffs for veteran women.



“She (Mash-ka-wizid-ode’-ogitchidaw-kwe, ‘Strong Heart Woman’) came to me as a gift. She fell from the sky in a blizzard. It’s thought she flew into a power line. A Native American man went out looking for this fallen warrior. He found her in the Black River up by Cheboygan, perfectly preserved in clear ice. He performed a traditional ceremony with tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweet grass when removing Her from the river. The ceremonial group used songs to call in the Spirits to be transferred to the people, to guide them in creating an Eagle Staff from Her.

“Because I’ve worked so much in addiction treatment as a social worker and a recovering alcoholic, and I am a veteran, his vision from the ceremony was to give the eagle to me, as a healer and a warrior, to create a healing staff.

“‘She’ came with ten feathers, but now has forty-seven. The feathers attach to a heavy brown fabric cape that drapes from the eagle’s shoulders in resemblance of the bird sitting on a branch with its wings folded at its sides.” Linda strokes the feathers lovingly as she recalls their origins. “Each feather has been gifted to me from people I’ve met in California,

Arizona, Michigan—wherever She and I travel—each representing healing from a variety of injuries.”

When Linda travels by plane, Mash-ka-wizid-ode’-ogitchidaw-kwe is never ‘checked’ as luggage. ‘She’ is dissembled and placed in customized bags for Linda to have with her at all times. A folded fabric case, much like one in which a painter would carry their brushes, has stitched partitions to protect each precious feather. Only the White Diamond Willow staff that supports Her is ‘checked’ in a customized fishing rod case.

When assembled, ‘She’ has a red feather on Her chest, which represents the wounds of a returning injured warrior, placed with a white feather, which represents healing. The small medicine bag around Her neck contains the sacred plants: tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweet grass. A series of patches from each branch of the Armed Forces is stitched down the center of Her back.

Linda told of the challenging times in her life, when she ‘walked through that fire’ to overcome alcoholism, that ‘thorn in his flesh that could not be prayed away,’ and to overcome the trauma from her childhood molestation. “I asked Gitchimonadu, our One God/One Creator, ‘Why did this happen to me?’ It happened so that I walk on to help others. I’m now free of what happened to me—no pain, no shame now. By walking through the fire, a powerful spiritual experience that gave me strength, God gave me forgiveness and compassion. It happened to me so that I could help others. That is why ‘She’ is ‘Strong Heart Warrior Woman.’

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## Oral History: Mary Lee Allison, A Centennial Farm Story

*Interview highlights of Mary Lee Allison at her home on Fowler Road in Benzie County. She was eighty years old at this 2006 interview.*

I've lived here my entire life. It's the only place I know.

Our farm is now a Centennial farm because they were wanting to register Centennial farms here in Platte. They sent me a big pile of paper to fill out. I went and got the abstract to this farm because I had to have proof of its age. Not a deed, an abstract that tells from the time that Briggs came and homesteaded it. Their name is on it, my Grandpa and Grandma's name is on it, Mom and Daddy's name is on it, and now my name is on it.

Mr. and Mrs. Briggs came here after the Civil War to homestead the farm, and the government gave it to them. When they came here this was all woods, no roads, no nothing. The Briggs built their house out east of the barn. When the roads came through, why, their house was in the wrong place. So they built a log cabin right out here. I have a flowerbed there now, and I'm still digging up bricks from their chimney.

Mrs. Briggs was out 'blackberrying' one day, and it must have been cold outside because she had on a fur coat, and somebody shot her for a bear. Mr. Briggs took it so hard that he hung himself.

That's when Grandpa and Grandma bought the place, in 1890. Mom was a year old. They lived in

that log house for a while and then they built this house. I think they built the barn first because they always said 'the barn would build the house.'

I don't know why they built such a big one when they built this house. Ten rooms, and they just had a wood stove. But this oil heater here does a good job. I shut the front rooms off, and don't heat the upstairs.

I love farming. I just love running machinery. I miss it terribly right to this day, plowing and dragging there in the field on them tractors and putting in corn and hay.

I've got a picture of me sitting on a horse when I was only three years old. I was Daddy's shadow. When Daddy would be plowing or dragging or something, I was always out there riding horses with him. He'd usually use three horses, and I'd jump from one horse to the other. I raked hay with one horse and the old dump rake, not the side delivery, a dump rake. I couldn't sit on the feet and trip it, so I stood on the frame to trip it when I got to the wind row.

One time I came home from a Sunday school picnic and Daddy said, "Go look in the barn." I went out to the barn and there stood a sweet, little, bay pony. Oh, I just loved that horse! I called her Molly. The neighborhood kids had as much fun with her as I did. I had a buggy, I had a cart, and I had a sleigh. And they were always loaded. If I had any leisure time I was on a horse.

Dad died when I was fourteen years old. He was injured in the garden, equipment hit him in the ribs. He went to the Anna Markum Hospital in Frankfort. I was too young to drive, so we had a neighbor take Mom and I over to see him. The hospital was a big old house, the first hospital in this area, as I recall. I was there on my birthday, and he gave me a 50-cent piece, which I still have, I never spent it. Dad was there for weeks, feeling fine one day and gone the next.

Mom had a limp as a result of the polio she had as a girl. She was paralyzed on her left side quite badly. She walked with a stick. After Dad passed away, I took over taking care of the cows. In order to finish high school I had to get my chores done early to meet the bus. I only had about five cows then because I had to go to high school, but I'd milk them by hand. I milked by hand until 1965.

Everyone has said there aren't very many girls would do what I've done. Stay here and farm like that, took care of Mom, run all this machinery...

For years our cows ran on State land all up east and north of here, it wasn't fenced. The advantage of running the State land was that there was more feed for them. They'd roam all over. For crying out loud, in the fall of the year, if there's an apple tree, I think they'd go about twenty miles to eat one apple. A lot of times I'd be

hunting cows 'til 10 or 11 o'clock at night on horseback. I wasn't afraid. I wouldn't do it today, not for love or money. It wasn't only just my cows; it was some of the neighbor's too. They'd get together sometimes and we'd have to separate them. That's the way we did it until the government planted those pine trees. They come along saying our cows hurt their trees, and wouldn't let us use the State land anymore.

I was the youngest, with two older sisters. My sister that's living, Hazel, is twelve years older than me. My sister Vera was ten years older than me, but she died at age thirty-one. I don't have kinfolk that live close by, nobody to take care of me. I was real bad in '99 when I had that surgery for a cancerous tumor. I had the fire here in March, and the surgery in June of the same year. I couldn't stay here so I stayed six weeks down to the motel.

I had to have a biopsy at the hospital in Traverse City, so my niece from Muskegon went with me. I'd never been in the hospital, and I was just scared to death. I was shaking so, I just prayed for the Lord to take me.

Well, I expected the Lord to heal me so I wouldn't have to go back to the hospital after the biopsy. But it was cancer. It just kept getting worse and worse. "Well," I said, "I guess I might as well go to the hospital, I'm going to croak one way or the other." So I went up to Munson and was there eight days. I just cried and cried and cried and cried. I told them, "No chemo. I'll die first," people suffer so with chemo.



I had to go back several times for checkups. I asked the doctor how long I would have to keep up those checkups. He told me for the rest of my life. I said, "Good grief." After two more checkups I said, "That cancer is not coming back! When the Lord heals He does a good job. He doesn't do a half of one!" And I didn't go back.

I'd been healed of appendicitis when I was in senior high school. I was awful sick with it, but I didn't have my appendix taken out. The Lord healed me. The doctor said that was the work of a higher power than any of us. That's a testimony. I just as soon the whole world knew it, 'cause that's honor to God.

We used to have Union Sunday School here in the schoolhouse. It used to be my grandma's house, then a schoolhouse. We sold it to the church. I was appointed Sunday school secretary and treasurer when I was fifteen. I had that job until the church closed in '69. The church got moved to Empire, they took it right down the road. Now it's part of the historical exhibit there.

I was church secretary for seventeen years at Woodside

Wesleyan Church by Lake Ann. I did it volunteer. They kept putting me in, putting me in, voting me in. In '99, I was real sick so I gave it up, because I couldn't go to board meetings. I didn't think I was doing my job. I still go to church, drive over there on Sunday. I won't go to church at night because I won't drive through the boondocks. I will not. I told them, I will not come at night." If I don't come one Sunday, I usually get a phone call or something.

I still have back problems—God hasn't healed that. I guess that's the sword in the flesh. I've sold all my farm equipment. I've got my tractor yet, a 530 diesel, big tractor with a loader on it. I've got a manure spreader that I use when I rake the yard, I put leaves in it so I can spread it and don't have to do it by hand. I've got a nine-foot lift disc that I work up the garden with. I can and freeze produce for myself. I've got a freezer now. I sold logs so I could put in a bathroom. I've only had an inside toilet for about six years.

The only thing I regret is not taking a secretary job like I wanted to do. I wanted to go to Business College there in Muskegon for a couple of years. Take up advanced typing, bookkeeping, and shorthand. They didn't teach that when I was in school. The only thing I regret about that is that I'd have a good Social Security check today. Now I only get \$164.00 a month and I worked my head off. And I think that's wrong.

*Mary Lee Allison died on April 8, 2014, at age 87.*

## Calendar

### December

- 1 **Newsletter deadline for January 2018 newsletter.**

### January 2018

- 8 **Board Meeting.** Mon., 2 PM.  
*Thirlby Room at TADL*
- 26 **Book Group.** *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs took on New York's Master Builder (Robert Moses) and Transformed the City*, by Anthony Flint. *Thirlby Room at TADL*

### February

- 4 **Souper Bowl Sunday.**  
12:30–2:30. \$5 donation.  
Speaker: **Karen Anderson**  
author of *Gradual Clearing*.  
Lunch catered by Centre Street  
Cafe. Reservations a must:  
421-3343, 703-597-7925,  
sansenp19@earthlink.net. *TADL:*  
*Traverse Area District Library, 610*  
*Woodmere Ave., Traverse City*
- 4 **Board Meeting.** Sun.,  
following Souper Sunday event.

*Thirlby Room at TADL*

### April

- 9 **Board Meeting.** Mon., 2 PM.  
*Thirlby Room at TADL*

- 27 **Book Group.** *Celebrating National Poetry Month.* Bring poems by women. *Thirlby Room at TADL*

### July

- 19 **Book Group.** *The Civil Wars of Julia Ward Howe, a Biography*, by Elaine Showalter. *Thirlby Room at TADL*

### August

- 17 **Newsletter deadline for September newsletter.**

### September

- 8 **Board Meeting.** Mon., 2 PM.  
*Thirlby Room at TADL*

### October

- 25 **Book Group.** *The Space Between Us*, by Thrity Umrigar and/or *The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan*, by Rafia Zakaria. *Thirlby Room at TADL*

## Join WHPNM

Seniors: \$10  
Students: \$10  
Other individuals: \$15  
Business/Organization: \$25  
Dues payable to WHPNM.  
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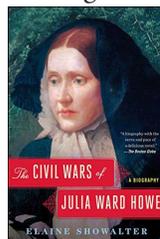
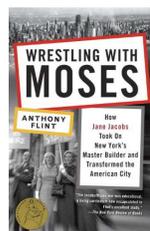
### Book Group continued from p. 1

Eunice Crockett said she finally accepts that she's a shy person, a belief that Karen Anderson (shyly) seconded about herself.

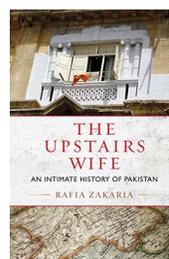
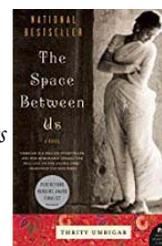
Since this book was preceded by another collection of essays by younger women, "The Bitch in the House," we considered the question, what do we know now that we didn't know at 30 (or 50!)? There were many comments about the influences of mothers (and fathers) on "who we became" or thought we should become. Also how different life is for our daughters who have so many more choices than we do. We celebrate this change!

Here is the schedule for our next discussions; please join us!

- January 26, 2018, *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs took on New York's Master Builder (Robert Moses) and Transformed the City*, by Anthony Flint.
- April 27, *Celebrating National Poetry Month* by bringing poems by women, including ourselves.
- July 19, *The Civil Wars of Julia Ward Howe, a Biography*, by Elaine Showalter.



- October 25, *The Space Between Us*, by Thrity Umrigar and/or *The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan*, by Rafia Zakaria.



These are all currently available in paperback, and popular enough that they are all at Traverse Area District Library (TADL)

We meet in the Thirlby Room at TADL.



Women's History Project of Northwest Michigan  
P.O. Box 4463  
Traverse City, MI 49685

