

*Empowering Women to Change Their World...*

# **The Joys of Journaling: A Dialogue**



By

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and

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## About the Authors



Carolyn Howard-Johnson's first novel, *This is the Place*, and *Harkening: A Collection of Stories Remembered* are both award-winners. Her fiction, nonfiction and poems have appeared in national magazines, anthologies and review journals. She speaks on Utah's culture, tolerance and other subjects and has appeared on TV and hundreds of radio stations nationwide. She is an instructor for UCLA Extension's Writers' Program and has shared her expertise on publishing and writing at venues like San Diego State's world renowned Writers' Conference and Call to Arts! EXPO. She was recently awarded Woman of the Year in Arts and Entertainment by the California Legislature and her nitty gritty how-to book, *The Frugal Book Promoter*, won USA Book News' "Best Professional Book 2004," and her chapbook of poetry, *Tracings*, is available at <http://finishinglinepress.com>. She loves to travel and has studied writing at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, UK: Herzen University in St. Petersburg, RU; and Charles University in Prague. Her website is: <http://carolynhowardjohnson.com>.



Erica Miner went back to her lifelong love of writing when injuries suffered in a car accident spelled the end of her career as a violinist with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. She went on to write several award-winning screenplays, and her debut novel, *Travels With My Lovers*, (available at amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com and authorhouse.com) won the Fiction Prize in the Direct from the Author Book Awards. Her essays and poetry have appeared in several publications in the US and abroad, and she is a frequent radio and online interview guest. Erica was recently named a 'Top-rated' lecturer for Celebrity Cruise Lines, and her topics - both on the high seas and in her home state of California, include: Journaling - the 'Write' Way to a Better Life; From Violinist to Novelist - Self-Reinvention; and Single Mom Survival. Her website is: <http://www.ericaminer.com>.

Carolyn Howard-Johnson and Erica Miner are both Queens at [www.QueenPower.com](http://www.QueenPower.com).







## The Joys of Journaling: A Dialogue

This conversation on journaling began when one queen sent another queen an email, asking for help. It blossomed into a dialogue on organization, attraction, coincidence, meditation, and – yes, of course – journaling.

Here's how the dialogue began:

### **Dear Journaling Queen:**

I couldn't resist writing to you. You are the Ann Landers of the journaling world. My first two books, *THIS IS THE PLACE* and *HARKENING* are both the direct result of journaling and both are award-winners. Obviously, journaling has worked for me but I know very little about it. Would you mind if I directed some questions to you?

Very best,

Your Fellow Queen at QueenPower.com

The Queen of Frugal Promotions, **Carolyn Howard-Johnson**,  
Author of *The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your  
Publisher Won't*

And Erica responded:

### **Dear Queen of Frugal Promotions:**

How great to hear from you! Kudos on your award-winning books. It does seem as if we could work together in some awesome way. I am interested in cross-promoting and open to answering your questions, so shoot!

### **Erica Miner**

Your Fellow Queen at QueenMe.com – 'Journaling Queen'

Author of *TRAVELS WITH MY LOVERS* and award-winning speaker  
for Celebrity Cruise Lines

**The dialogue continues...**





## On Organizing...

**From Carolyn:** I am pleased that the Queen of Journaling for QueenPower.com can find the time to help. One of my problems is that I've been writing stuff down for so long it is impossible to find anything. Do you have any ideas for me?

**From Erica:** In order to help you organize your journals I'd need to know more about what your processes might be. What format do you journal in? How many journals do you have? How much is written in each of them? Enlighten me so can better respond to your journaling needs.

**From Carolyn:** Oh, my gosh. You're going to hate me. I have journals cum scrapbooks from vacations, diaries from high school, loose letters I wrote to my husband when I was furious and never gave them to him, ideas for poems I stuff in my bra for lack of a better place and then put open a journal and stuff the old crinkled paper under the cover...you get the idea.

I maybe have 150 different books. They are all different sizes and thicknesses and some of them bulge so they can't be stacked. And, of course, unlike computers, none of them has a "find" function. That means the only way to glean information from them is to spend hours browsing. That is the only technique I use. If I look for something specific I get frustrated and give up. Quite unqueenly!

**From Erica:** You present a number of issues I usually address in separate stages of my lectures and I want to give it some thought before I plunge in. I will give you a point-by-point response. Promise!

**From Carolyn:** I notice in your signature you have an award-winning novel, TRAVELS WITH MY LOVERS. Perhaps you'd like to announce it in my newsletter, "Sharing with Writers."





## On Transforming Your Journals Into Published Work...

**From Erica:** Thank you. Here's a bit about my book – hope you like the premise!

*A young mom suddenly finds herself single when her husband leaves her – for another man. Determined not to let this get her down, she takes off on some wild and crazy travel adventures and finds love in a number of different languages; but she also discovers her own self-worth.*

I've thought of something else I need to know in order to help you. How did you transform your journals to your creative, published work?

**From Carolyn:** I conceived of THIS IS THE PLACE when I was in high school in the 50s. I still have the diary. (I don't think anyone ever heard of a journal in the sense that we use it today and "journal" certainly wasn't ever used as a verb!). The diary was lime green leather with gold lettering. It had a little brass lock with a key on it. My aunts (both of whom were only a little older than I) gave it to me for Christmas.

Anyway, in it I dreamed that one day I would write the next GONE WITH THE WIND but this one would be set in Utah rather than the South. From that day on I thought about the book (untitled, of course!) when I wrote about events in my diaries, especially those about our family history. The entries were cursory at first, but even at that they worked well many years later to jog my memory some four decades after I made those entries!

By the way, HARKENING: A COLLECTION OF STORIES REMEMBERED is a collection of related stories that didn't fit in THIS IS THE PLACE. The stories are all connected; the reader will see some characters again and again and by the end will see that it is the story of family's trek from Michigan, through a now defunct railroad town in New Mexico, into Utah and then on to the golden state of California where people tend to be more open, more accepting of people different from themselves.

I know, way more info than you needed, but it's a start.





**From Erica:** We have so many parallels. I am mining my own high school journals for my 'labor of love' - a novel series based on my own experiences in the 60s -- in Michigan, by the way! Those diaries have been lost, but because I journaled faithfully all those years my recall is so vivid that I can write the stories as if they happened yesterday. The series will follow the journey of four young best friends. Show how their paths diverge and come back together over the years, eventually focusing the protagonist. It ends up as one woman's trek, but she still ends up in California. See what I mean by parallels! And by the way, I think a lime-green journal with gold lettering sounds awesome!

**From Carolyn:** Your story illustrates how the universe puts people together, leads people away from some things, toward others. It seems as if events that I thought were the most awful things that could happen to a person (cancer, as an example) turned out to be blessings. The trick is to look at experiences and ask, "What was my part in that -- both pro and con?" and "How can I make what I am learning here work for the betterment of all including me."

The other thing -- and you alluded to it -- is that journaling helps us see/remember/mold events so that they might be analyzed and seen in a different way. Some people wouldn't recognize opportunity if it came up and snoozed in their lap. Journaling can help them see what the universe is trying to communicate to them.

## On Journaling to Learn From Experience...

**From Erica:** I agree. There's a reason for everything, but we don't usually find out what it is until much later. When we do, however, it is always a revelation. Journaling helps us look learn from those experiences. It's all about the insights, both from the Universe and from within us.





*Erica's Note: Carolyn and I later found we are both Aries, born a couple days (and a few years) apart in the month of April. Both love to travel and do a lot of it. Both love classical music. And on and on!*

**From Carolyn:** I'm curious .Do you know of any journaling techniques that help us do that -- specifically? You know, see patterns or underlying meanings we might otherwise miss?

**From Erica:** Great Question!  
I have a number of these; my favorite is what I call **Journaling Meditation**. You quiet your mind and go back to a time when you felt at peace. Try to reproduce that feeling and when you're 'in the zone' then start writing. Describe where you were, how you felt at that time.

You then distill some calming phrases from your words which you can turn into affirmations, or a mantra. Use this mantra to connect with your Higher Self and thus empower your insights. You can even record these on a tape and use them as your self-guided meditation. You may want to look up the works of Ira Progoff at your library for more on this subject.

And on the subject of Meditation, I'd like to add the following:

I think as women our hearts are definitely connected. And with that collective energy, great inspirational benefits can come. When I think of my heart being connected to other 'soul sisters', I feel a great meditative connection to my higher self. That meditative state is a powerful conduit in my journaling practice, and I like to bring this into my journaling workshops. I've done many of these workshops and seminars in my Southern California and would like to expand into other parts of the country. (Details about my seminars can be found at: <http://www.ericaminer.com/seminars.php>). At the moment, I am expanding my practice into the online community, with upcoming teleclasses on Queenpower.com and the Long Story Short series (<http://www.alongstoryshort.net/TRAVELSWITHMYLOVERS.html>) and my Journaling for Writers course for the brand-new Long Story Short School of Writing (<http://www.lsswritingschool.com/>

**From Carolyn:** Not to nag you but back to that question about organizing my journals. Did you sleep on it?





## More On Organizing...

**From Erica:**

Oh, yeah. Guess we got off the track, huh. We've been having so much fun. This is a huge topic, Carolyn! 150 journals! In any case, here goes:

I think a '**boot camp getting organized**' solution might suit your needs. Before you even think about organizing these into vastly different categories you need to do a left-brain exercise. Here's what I would suggest:

1. Schedule yourself a chunk of time - literally, write it in your date book - for going through your various journals. Clear away a space in which you will arrange all of them-- a large shelf if possible--just for your journals.
2. Pull out a few at a time, sit on the floor and organize them according to type (diaries, letters, scrapbooks, etc.), then size. (For the 'bulging' ones you may need a separate box.)
3. Do this for as long as you have patience; when you can't deal with it anymore, put them on the allocated shelf in order of size (I know this sounds silly, but it will give you a visual advantage when you want to search for something.) If you need another day, another hour, allow for that; but try to do it all in one week, an hour a day perhaps, until you have sorted everything.
4. Then put them in chronological order. This is probably the most important step, but you can't get to it, dear Frugal Promoter Queen, until you've done the above left-brain organization.
5. This is where your computer will come in. Once you've got everything organized according to category and chronology, you can start a new file on your computer - I suggest Word or an Excel spreadsheet - that will keep track of what, where, when, etc. THEN you will be able to keep track of all your writing and look up what you need when you need it and not 'get frustrated and give up.'

It sounds like a lot of work, but it will be worth it in the end, especially when it comes time to refer to these when writing your next novel(s)!

By the way, thanks for bringing up the subject of 'unsent letters.' I have a whole mini-lecture on that, which I will address in my next monthly e-mail newsletter, so stay tuned!

*Erica's Note: For those Queens who do not yet subscribe to my newsletter, please feel free to do so at:  
<http://www.ericaminer.com/newsletter.php>*





I hope I've given you a bit of help with your question. Take courage, and if you need more motivation, don't hesitate to contact me.

**From Carolyn:** I think you put your finger on it. I shouldn't expect too much, but there is a lot I can do with that messy pile of papers and books. Once done, I'm sure I shall have more stories to tell, maybe even another novel ready to knead into something special.

So, tell me, now that we're old friends, when do you think we could get together?

**From Erica:** Yep, soon, very soon.



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