**Bringing Stories Home….**

1. **Develop a Soft Shoulder**

Over the course of this week, we found plenty of story material. Some came from looking way back in our lives, revisiting places we have been, people we have known, and moments of awe. Other stories we shared were brand new tales of joy, delight, and discovery from our time at the ranch.

As you journey onwards, notice when bits and pieces of stories come back to you and tap you on the shoulder. Welcome then, and keep a list, jotting down one, two, or three words that will bring that story back to mind.

1. **Carve Out a Space for Storytelling**

Like so much in life, storytelling is about setting intention. That’s what we did in our class, and it worked. Find a time to share stories, perhaps over a meal, on a walk with a friend, gathering for a holiday. It needn’t be anything fancy – as we found in class, the stories we seek are never far away. There are many paths to the well and, with a little time and space, we can return again and again, to the realm of story.

1. **Play Slowly**

So much of storytelling is about noticing. And noticing is about *slowing down*.

Be like those “Slow Children at Play.” Give yourself time to reflect. Notice the stories that come to you, both from day-to-day life and from your past.

1. **Find a Story Buddy**

This can be quite simple. Ask if they’d be up for sharing a tiny story – or even a memorable moment – once a week. Or once a month. Start small. It can happen in person, by phone, or zoom. Keep it simple and short, so the task doesn’t become onerous. You’ll find that your shoulders continue to soften and your collection of stories grows quite quickly.

1. **Seek Out Storytellers**

There are so many opportunities to hear storytelling in all its forms, from festivals around the country to the many MOTH events in nearly every city, where people are telling personal stories. Have a look online – you can simply start by Googling “Storytelling Near Me.”

1. **Put it in Writing**

Journaling is a great way to keep track of stories. Another approach is to simply develop a list of stories you know – that can be as easy as starting a document on your computer or a notebook. In doing this, the idea is not to write out all your stories – which can be quite a job – but rather to simply list 3-4 words that remind you of a story that you know, as we did in class. Once you remember that you know it, it becomes easy to tell.

1. **Host a Story Gathering**

Bringing together a group of people with the intent to share stories is natural and fun. Food – and perhaps drink – is always a good way to set the mood, and once people know that the intention is to share stories, you’re most of the way there.

Following up on what we did in class, story prompts can be great. Start with just one – having many to choose from confuses the shoulders. It helps to have people sit in a circle, if possible, or in some way they can see one another. Carving out some silence is key – we used chimes and took 45 seconds to sit with a prompt. Offering only one prompt at a time will keep it from getting confusing. If you want, and have a larger group, you can have people tell stories to a partner first, so everyone gets to talk. With a smaller group, however, it’s great to take some silence, then simply ask who has a story to tell.

One thing to keep in mind is deciding what to do at the end of a story. While there might be a tendency to applaud – as we do for so much in our culture – that applause can be kind of awkward. I think it’s best to set a ground rule that when someone shares a story you thank them, then use your chimes to allow 15 seconds for the story to settle, and turn to the next teller.

**Additional Prompts**

There were a few story prompts on the class handout which I’ve repeated below, for convenience. Below is a longer list, based partly on our discussion and partly on some of my favorites. Wishing you rich sharing of stories!

Blessings,

Joel

P.S. If you’d like to do further work together, I offer one-on-one story coaching, by phone, on zoom. This can be useful if you’re working on a particular story or perhaps writing a book. If you’d like to explore this, email Joel@storyapge.com

**Story Strings**

There’s an old Jewish saying that “Each of us has three names – the one we were born with, the one we’re called by others, and the one we call ourselves.” Ponder that for a bit, then say something about your name. It doesn’t have to address all three – it can by why you like it, or don’t, who you were named for

or how your name has changed over time.

This can be a great way to begin a story rich conversation with someone:

“So, how did you get your name?”

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Tell about a teacher you’ll always remember.

If possible, think of one particular encounter with that teacher,

perhaps ending with something you learned.

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Think of an encounter with an animal you have known. It could be a pet, or an

animal you met briefly.

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Looking back over your life, can you recall a time

when you found yourself astounded

by a single color?

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Close your eyes until your inner ear hears a piece of music that you once loved. As you listen to it, let it bring back all the memories that went with it. As you tell about it, you may want to begin with the music – or keep it as the reveal at the ending.

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Think about one particular car you’ll always remember – and why.

Whatever happened to it?

Share the story

Try to recall a food you either loved or hated when you were a child. Once you have it, try to conjure it up in your memory, letting your other senses fill in the scene.

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We all have relatives, and some of them are the sorts of folks around whom stories seem to coalesce. Can you introduce us to one of them?

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Let your mind wander back through your life to a point where you had as much time as you wanted – so much that you were bored, and didn’t know what to do with it

Now ask yourself: What did you do with it?

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Tell about a summer that you’ll never forget.

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You probably spent a lot of time watching TV as a kid –

Tell about a favorite show – maybe there was a theme song to it? As you think about it, was there an “And then one day” moment.

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Think back to a time you found yourself absolutely awe-struck. Go back and relive that moment – and see if there’s a story leading up to it.

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Sift through your memory or possessions until you come upon a gift you were given.

Try to recall everything you can about it – who and where it came

from, and at it means to you.

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Humility is a lesson that we seem destined to learn,

time and again. Tell yourself the story of a time

you found yourself humbled.

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Think of a time in your life when you found an

unexpected connection to a stranger.

Tell the story.

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Tell the story of something you have lost.

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Tell a story that revolves around a photograph. If you have the photo, you can decide where to introduce it into the story. It can make for a great ending.

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Tell about a time when something bad happened that ultimately led to something good.

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What kind of work did your parents do. If they worked outside the house, did you visit them there? Can you picture the setting? Maybe tell about a visit.

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What was your best year in school? Why?

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What was a favorite holiday when you were a kid? Thinking about that holiday,

was there one particular year of celebrating it that you remember?

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Who did you see as a hero when you were growing up? Can you tell

something about them?

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Can you recall a time when you felt very, very far from home?

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Restaurants can be a great source of stories. Can you think about one you used to go to when you were a kid – that offers the build in “every day” aspect.

Is there an “And then one day?”

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Tell about a memorable encounter with weather.

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Tell about how you met someone who came to be very important in your life.

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Tell about a time you discovered something that you love.

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Tell about something very, very small.

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Share a moment from your time at Rancho la Puerta. Maybe a story you shared in class? A moment of connection? Of discovery?

A moment of awe?