



By: Linda C. Wisniewski

Susan Tschepik was 46 years old and married with three children ages 9, 10, and 13 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her husband gave her a journal to capture her thoughts and feelings, and that journal became the foundation of her book *Got Breast Cancer?*

Tschepik worked as a registered nurse for over 35 years and wrote the guide to help other women going through treatment. Born and raised in Montgomery County, she has lived in Doylestown for the past

13 years. After graduating from the Medical College of Pennsylvania School of Nursing in 1979, she worked at Frankford, Abington Memorial, and other area hospitals as well as healthcare organizations. Currently, she is a nurse/case manager/transition coach.

Tschepik says her "motivation for writing this book stemmed from the fact that I was a nurse and still missed my own symptoms... the lack of knowledge regarding my own personal risk factors...and the benefits of early detection (were) the impetus for my desire to educate other women. More and more women want to be involved in the decision-making process, which ultimately returns the control that cancer can take away from you. My approach may reveal a different perspective on how to navigate the diagnosis ...while offering guidance, experiential advice and humor."

Tschepik notes that many people stepped up to help during her treatment. Moms from her children's school delivered meals and helped with transportation. A friend in New York City was going through breast cancer treatment at the same time, and the two "confided, supported, and sympathized and sometimes even laughed with each throughout our journeys."

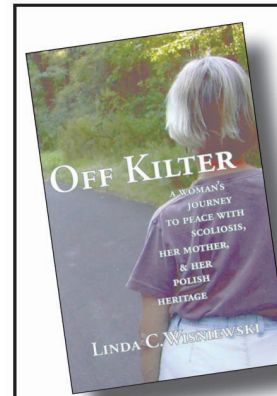
The author says her primary goal in self-publishing *Got Breast Cancer?* was "to educate on the importance of early detection, treatment, and navigation through breast cancer by sharing my own experience." She plans to write a follow-up book that delves more into the actual navigation strategies through other diagnoses as well.

A seminar at the Pearl S. Buck Writing Center inspired her to research CreateSpace, the self-publishing service of Amazon, which she

ultimately used to produce *Got Breast Cancer?* Find more about Susan Tschepik and her journey at <http://www.gotbreastcancer.net>.

Linda C. Wisniewski teaches memoir workshops and

enjoys speaking about the healing power of writing. Visit her website at www.lindawis.com or contact her at lindawis@comcast.net to schedule a class or presentation for your group.



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Creativity Through Planned Reflection



By:
Anne Hamilton, M.F.A.

Last summer, I made a conscious effort to set aside time to clear my mind. I took a short hiatus from my dramaturgy practice after teaching the playwriting workshop at the Philadelphia Writers Conference in June. Planning the break took a great deal of effort, because it involved notifying all of my writers and editors that I

would not be available for a short while.

As an adult, I find that I have to work twice as hard to find space to rest. Yet, if I don't rest, I can't regenerate. During my deliberate break, I looked to other women for inspiration. I read photographer Annie Leibovitz's *PILGRIMAGE*, a thick coffee table book with photos that she took not on assignment, but from her own sense of interest. She began by visiting writers and artists' studios and then started photographing landscapes and objects. Some of the creative settings belonged to Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Louisa May Alcott, and Georgie O'Keefe.

I returned to some of the things I love to do most. I took a trip to the sea, visited old homes and churches,

and bought fresh produce from local farmers. I walked in strange cities. I took road trips. I walked by rivers and looked at the scenery. I spent more time with people I love and avoided the ones who cause me stress.

What does all of this have to do with what's happening on stage in Bucks County? Well, what eventually appears on the stage comes from the heart, mind, and hands. I did an experiment to change the foundations of my thinking and perceptions.

As a playwright, I don't know yet what kind of new stage work this break will inspire; I didn't write anything new during my hiatus. Yet I noted the journeys taken by every one of the women in Leibovitz's book – whether of isolation, wandering, or exploration.

As Amy Goodman recently said, "Go to the silence."

Anne Hamilton has 24 years of experience as a dramaturg. She is available for script consultations and career advising through hamiltonlit@hotmail.com. Her drama *THE SHOEBOX*

is a winner of *Little Black Dress INK's 4th Annual Female Playwrights Onstage Project – OUTSIDE THE LINES – National Festival of New Work*. It was read in Minneapolis and Los Angeles and received a production in Arizona in August.

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