

## **Sabbatical Report**

Reading, Writing, and Wandering: A Sabbatical Potpourri

By

Pam Dane

The title of my report reflects the 10 weeks that I spent last Fall Term on sabbatical. My initial sabbatical proposal stated that I wanted to continue work on a book about memoirs of women expatriates during the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that I had begun over 8 years ago. As many others who have taken sabbaticals report, what I thought I could accomplish and what I did accomplish turned out to be other than what I expected.

I now look back on my sabbatical as a series of journeys; journeys into writing and research, journeys of the women I'm writing about, actual journeys I myself took, and finally journeys exploring my own teaching and learning. Throughout the course of these various journeys, I traveled roads I hadn't taken before, I became lost, and I wandered into new and exciting places.

I'll begin with the journey back into my book. As all of you know, writing is a very difficult process even when you are enthusiastic about your subject. Picking up a project begun many years ago and finding your way back into your research and thinking is even more difficult. When I began my sabbatical, I pulled out the many pages I had already written, the massive notes that I had taken, rough drafts with feedback from trusted readers, and the memoirs of the 15 or more women whose works I am studying. I stacked all of this on my work table and realized almost at once that 10 weeks would

never be enough for me to do the kind of in depth work that I needed to do to continue this project. So I decided to tackle one small part of it, which was amassing short bios of each of the women I'm working on and then putting together a power point presentation that I could share with others, especially my students. I also rewrote the introduction to my project. I realized that in order to go further I would need much more time to reread many of the primary works I wanted to include, so I put the books back on the shelf and forgave myself for trying to do too much in so short of a time. That journey was one of coming to an understanding of what I could and could not do and letting myself be all right with that decision.

My next journey was one that I took with my husband and granddaughter to Tokyo to visit another granddaughter studying there for a year. I learned so much from this journey that it's hard to put it all into this short report. My two granddaughters are both Japanese majors and are fluent in the language, which was very helpful. I wandered throughout Tokyo, into ancient temples and modern department stores. I explored museums and tasted new foods. I encountered a culture as far from my own as could be. I learned what it's like to be in a place without access to a common language. This journey was one that I will incorporate into my teaching in various ways as I remember how it felt to a stranger in a strange land. Finally, I gained a deeper knowledge of my two granddaughters and what a joy it was to see them as students who are curious and open to new ideas and people. I will treasure this experience the rest of my life.

My final journey was a journey into my own thoughts and processes of teaching. From my trip to Japan, I became very interested in how to work more closely with my students in ways that would connect them to each other and to the world around them. I

wanted to find out how to help students incorporate empathy and spirituality into their studies. I spent time reading Parker Palmer's works on pedagogy and I attended an institute in San Francisco regarding spirituality and pedagogy. I am continuing my studies with regard to these ideas and hope to discover more ways to aid students on their own educational paths.