March 28th 2015  
SVWG Fifth Anniversary Meeting

Looking Back

As you look back on your experiences with the SVWG, write about your first interactions with or memories of the group and any thoughts you have to share about the group, the writing we’ve done, and the community we have formed. To help prompt some memories:

- What has it meant to you to be a member of a veterans' writing group?
- What brought you to the group originally, and what keeps you coming back?
- How has your writing changed or developed through your interactions in the group?
- What kinds of concerns or themes have emerged in your writing?
- How has your relationship to the act of writing changed?
- In what ways has the group challenged your thinking about writing?
- How has meditation factored into your writing practice?

Saying Thanks

The SVWG could not happen without volunteer labor. The group is entirely a volunteer operation, co-led by me, Ivy, and Diane and funded by the SU Writing Program and my own research funds. You know us and interact with us, but there are four unsung angels who support the SVWG with their time, talents, and labor. We want to introduce you to these people and ask you to write a note in the cards we’ve provided to thank them. If you want, you can write a separate note and add it to the card.

LouAnn Payne, who arranges to have flyers in public libraries, make copies for the group, and provide refreshments for every meeting. She stops off at Wegman’s on her morning commute before work to buy refreshments for us. She brings the refreshments to the Writing Center in a cooler at the end of her workday on Friday. She has given of her time freely and has helped us plan retreats and events, including this event. She is the Director’s Secretary in the Writing Program at Syracuse University. LouAnn has family members who serve, including her nephew who is currently serving. She is also the co-founder of a non-profit that benefits military families.

George Rhinehart: The Manager of Writing Technologies in the Writing Program. George maintains our website, posting our assignments and announcements, and he recently started our new listserv and founded our facebook group. George’s son-in-law served in the military and saw combat. George has been thoughtful and supportive of the SVWG at every turn.
**Lois Agnew:** The Department Chair of the Writing Program. Lois has consistently supported the SVWG through providing monies for refreshments and being enthusiastic about the work we are doing. Lois cares deeply about student veterans on campus as well.

**Ben Erwin:** The Writing Center Director at SU. Ben has generously agreed to let us use the Writing Center space for our meetings. We try to get the place clean and squared away after our meetings, but Ben probably has to do a little straightening after us! Ben and many of the consultants in the Writing Center work with student veterans and have been very supportive of our work.

**Military Anniversary**

For some veterans and family members of veterans, the word "anniversary" may prompt associations with the loss of a close friend or family member who died while serving. Some members of the group have already written about these anniversaries, and doing so can be an important part of the grieving and healing processes. Other important anniversaries might be your date of enlistment or separation from the military, major holidays, birthdays, family events, or wedding anniversaries spent in the military, or other kinds of milestones—promotions, transfers, awards won, etc. If you have an anniversary that marks an important event or turning point in your life, try writing about it. If you've already written about it, perhaps you have more to say or can bring a broader perspective to the piece now than when you first wrote this story.

**Risk and Sacrifice (Prompt from February’s meeting that didn’t make it onto the hand-out)**

Write about a specific time in your service when you had to make a decision (or almost had to make a decision) that involved risking or sacrificing something personally for the benefit of someone else. What were you risking? Personal safety, health, status/rank, reputation, friendships, self-respect, etc.? Who were you risking for? Did you ultimately take that risk, or would you have taken it? What ended up happening? If you had the chance to go back in time, would you make the same decision?

If you’re writing as a family member or supporter of someone in the military, write about these ideas from a civilian perspective in relationship to your military loved-one. You can approach this by thinking about how your loved one’s time in the military involved a sense of sacrifice for you, or tell a story second-hand about a situation in which your loved-one had to confront risk or sacrifice during his/her time in the service.