

Web Books Blog



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The European Edition

When we left in mid-February for a five week vacation in Europe, one of my friends half-jokingly asked whether we planned to come back. This was days before the White House ambush of President Zelinsky, which we watched on BBC News. We were in France when Macron offered to cover Germany in its nuclear umbrella. We were in Spain when the administration defied a court order and flew detainees to Venezuela without benefit of a hearing. All this history in the making looks different on the far side of the Atlantic. As I'm writing this, my partner and I are a week away from returning home, and my friend's question no longer seems even vaguely funny.

The point of the trip was not to get away from the United States. The point, besides the joy of wandering and seeing new places, was to research settings for the next novel in the **Matriarchal Vampire** series. When we weren't obsessing over the news from America, I was learning more about the places and historical characters that will be part of *The Vampire Vivienne*, currently in draft. Readers of the first book in the series, [Vampires of a Certain Age](#), will remember Vivienne as the rescuer of that book's main character, Marion, from a mob of sixteenth century villagers who believe their healer is a witch. The upcoming novel is a prequel which tells the story of Vivienne's origins as a swordswoman in the Hundred Years War.

Disguised as a man, she participates in the battle at Azincourt, a site we visited on this trip. At the museum in [Azincourt](#) I learned about battlefield medicine in the early 1400s and was inspired to create a new character.

Vivienne is an Englishwoman who serves the English king, but in her nighttime scouting of French positions she meets and falls in love with Joan of Arc, another woman warrior who wore men's clothes to battle. France is full of historical sites commemorating Joan d'Arc. In our travels we visited [Orleans](#), where Joan led a triumphant force that broke the English siege. To this day Orleans celebrates Joan's victory each spring. We also went to [Rouen](#), the site of Joan's trial and execution for heresy and for wearing men's clothing. And we toured the newly restored Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, where 25 years after Joan's execution a [second trial](#) reversed her conviction.

Vivienne participates in all this history and takes from it the absolute need for solidarity with other women in the fight for our rights. That imperative to support women, and especially older women, is also the driver behind my upcoming essay collection. *Rock On: Power, Sex & Money after Sixty* is now out for reviews and will publish later this spring. This book explores topics such as creativity, healthcare, and of course, the power, sex and money in the title. Along with the essays, the book includes profiles of older women who are trailblazers in each field. Here is an early review from author Billie Best, another advocate for the rights of older women:

Stella Fosse has written the ultimate crone atlas to guide us through the life changes we encounter in the decades after menopause. There was a time when women our age just faded into the woodwork and were forgotten. But not anymore! We are a force to be reckoned with and we aren't going to sit quietly until we disappear. With *Rock On*, Fosse gives us a vision for options and insights for a future enriched by our native wisdom and fresh independence. This comprehensive roadmap for aging well is loaded with references, role models, and recommendations designed to help us navigate the best years of our lives. If you are a woman over fifty wondering about the path ahead, you need to read this book.

— Billie Best, [How I Made a Huge Mess of My Life](#) (or *Couples Therapy with a Dead Man*)

By the time you read this newsletter, I'll be heading back home to North Carolina, full of ideas for finishing Vivienne's story, and ready to support the rights of other American women in real life. All our stories are valuable, and I hope you will join me in [journaling](#) about the changes happening in our nation right now and how they affect each of us. May we each find ways to support our freedom in the days ahead.



Keep the pen moving, or the keys clicking.

All the best,

Stella,

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From the blog this month



Crisis Journal 2025

Stella Fosse

When the Pandemic began in 2020, I started a journal of extraordinary days that morphed into an online community where writers shared their daily thoughts. The value lay not so much in the final product as in the act of capturing the gritty reality of daily life in lockdown, especially in the early days when we had no idea who would live and who would die.

Five years later we are engaged in a different crisis that may also change the way we live. While



Traveling Your Creative Path at Any Age

Christine Walker

In 1977 at 28, I decided to make my way as an artist and writer. I knew that to succeed required more control of my time than I'd had in previous jobs. I quit my position as Program and Communications Director at an educational nonprofit in Kansas City, moved to San Francisco, rented a painting studio above a

keeping a journal is always a great idea, it has special significance when the world is upended. Right now changes to alliances, government services, and the economy happen daily. We older women face uncertainty around Medicare, Social Security, and women's rights. All this is material to write about.

What kind of journal do I mean? We see models of historical and policy analysis in the work of women like [Heather Cox Richardson](#), who analyzes each day's events in light of United States history; and [Joyce Vance](#), whose ongoing analysis is guided by her expertise in constitutional law. While these are important perspectives, a personal approach is also worthwhile. Your account of the days to come is a story that only you can tell, valuable in its particularity and in its connection to universal human experience.

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fortune cookie factory, and set up a drafting table in my apartment to begin a business in design and communications.

Fast forward to 2025, my resume includes art exhibitions, published books and songs, and a long list of clients served through my design and strategic visioning consulting practices. At 76, I've been my own boss for 48 years and never had a concept of retirement. To whom would I submit my resignation? Through lean years and bounty, setbacks and successes, a few guiding principles have lit my creative pathways and led to an interdisciplinary career that continues to intrigue. For this blog and with my new novel in mind, I'll focus [mostly on writing](#), but the principles apply to other disciplines.

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Stella Fosse



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