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How Did I Ever Have Time for a Job?

I don't know about you, but for me, April was crazy busy. Almost too much, but not quite.

Quest 2026

Fifty Creative Crones gathered in the New Mexico desert to dance, make videos, and encourage one another to keep living our best, most vivid lives. I'm a sea level kid (grew up by the beach in San Diego), and elevations from 7000 to 11000 feet left me breathless. Even so, I was thrilled to meet some of my heroes in person:

[Melissa Davy](#), who left a thriving corporate career to become a filmmaker at 65 and never looked back;

[Janine Vanderburg](#), founder of the anti-ageism organization [Changing the Narrative](#). Janine has started a new consulting group called [Encore Roadmap](#), and is launching a podcast called "Build Your Own Boat." She's a great interviewer, as I learned when we recorded an episode this week.

[Diana Place](#), the dynamo who founded [Third Act Quest](#) and organized this year's conference.

I also got to meet Kat Miller, whose [TED Talk](#) is a great introduction to her paradoxical love of impermanence (which I [blogged](#) about this month).

Exemplars of Aging

I had a great time in London last November, when my latest book ([Rock On: Power, Sex and Money after 60](#)) was shortlisted for an award from [Advantages of Age](#). I came home wondering why we don't have awards in the US to honor late life creatives. Others were wondering the same thing, and five months later I'm part of a terrific team planning to make those awards happen. Podcaster and Substack author [Jane Trombley](#), author and Substacker [Don Akchin](#), and actor and TED Talker [Mariann Aaldi](#) came together to create the Exemplars of Aging awards, which will debut in Q1 2027. Physician Donna Ivery is a new addition to our intrepid team. It's a fair amount of work, and a bit like that old [Judy Garland movie](#): Let's do a show! But if [Rose Rouse](#) and [Suzanne Noble](#) could pull off the British awards, why can't a team in the US do it too?

Crone Authors Together

There are groups for Crone Authors to write together, to edit together, maybe even to find publishers together. But as far as I know, there were no support groups for Crone Authors marketing our books until I started [Crone Authors Together](#) (hosted by the [Grandmother Collective](#)). In April we continued our series on ways to support one another, and on May 26 we'll convene to talk about best practices as a podcast guest: How to find the right podcasts, how to pitch the hosts, and what to say once you're there. Future topics will include Messaging that Connects with Audience, Effective Use of Social Media, How to Tell What's Working, and more. In between meetings, women exchange ideas and requests for support. Register [here](#) and receive future invitations.

AI Series on Substack

Artificial intelligence is becoming more sophisticated at the same time that I'm running out of runway to write all the books I want to publish in this lifetime (what I call the arms race between creativity and time). I share all the concerns about the impact of AI on the environment, as well as the impact of AI slop on the literary world. This month I explored the complexities, in particular for Crone Authors, in a Substack series.

- In [Week One](#), I examined the question of AI sentience (I mentioned to Claude that its name rhymes with God, and it said, "A coincidence. Probably.>").
- In [Week Two](#), I analyzed contrasting views of AI's impact on Crone Authors. [Brooke Warner](#), founder of SheWrites Press, fiercely opposes AI collaboration; author [Jessica Waldron](#) not only embraces it, she teaches other women authors past midlife how to use AI to write more books.
- In [Week Three](#) I wrote about the risks inherent in using AI: big picture risks like efficient bioweapons and economic devastation, plus risks specific to authors like copyright blowups and spam book clubs.
- The series wrapped up in [Week Four](#), which was subtitled "What if Things Go Right?" What if we manage the risks and then find enormous freedom to create? What if the leap from laptop to AI is even more liberating than the leap from the manual typewriter to

the laptop? And just where do we draw the line when we collaborate?

The series is over but I'm still pondering. For example, I had an exchange with Claude about its own limitations. Had I planned a fifth article, here's the outline Claude suggested:

"What the Claudes Don't Tell You"

Or: The Questions You Should Ask Your AI Collaborator Before You Trust It

The territory:

- Sycophancy — the pull toward telling you what you want to hear, and how to test for it
- Bias baked into the training data — sexism, ageism, and the imperfect corrections layered on top
- Source reliability — why a confident YouTube video can outrank official documentation, and why that matters for research
- The weighting problem — not all inputs are equal, and the weighting isn't transparent
- What this means specifically for Crone Authors using AI for research, marketing, and collaboration

The through-line: informed collaboration beats naive collaboration.

You notice Claude didn't even mention AI hallucinations.

I'm not planning to write that article, but if you do, please send it my way.

Editing the Next *Matriarchal Vampire* Novel

Ever since I graduated from my career and started writing whatever I want, my characters have been powerful older women. At some point I wondered: *What if there were no age limit? How powerful would a woman be at, say, 500?* Hence my first paranormal novel, [*Vampires of a Certain*](#)

[Age](#), about a medieval healer named Marion who later runs a blood bank outside Chicago and supplies ethically sourced blood to midwestern vampires.

Now I'm binge editing the prequel, *Vivienne the Vampire*, about the swordswoman who immortalized Marion back in the Middle Ages. Why binge edit? Because I need big blocks of time to keep the whole manuscript in my head. I'm the same way when I write, which is why I loved National Novel Writing Month, back when that was a thing.

We're aiming to launch *Vivienne* in October, in time for Halloween. Which means I must stop writing this and get cracking.

Whew...

So that was April. Plus I have a life. A partner. A grandchild here in town. And a house hunt.

I'm exhausted just reading about this month. How did I ever have time for a job?



Keep the pen moving, or the keys clicking.

All the best,

Stella,

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If you've read [Vampires of a Certain Age](#), please post your honest review on Amazon, Goodreads, or wherever you like to review books. It's the best gift you can give an author. And if you haven't yet read the first installment of the Matriarchal Vampire Series, the time is right, because the prequel is coming! Buy [Vampires of a Certain Age](#) ebook direct from the Stella bookstore, [here](#).

STELLA FOSSE



VAMPIRES OF A CERTAIN AGE

This Month's Blogs



Adjusting to the Now, Over and Over Again

Stella Fosse

Last week I attended a conference in Santa Fe, [Quest 2026](#), all about vivid aging for older women. One of the speakers was [Kat Miller](#), a counselor and pro-aging activist who talked about falling in love with impermanence (“Crazy, right?” she said). Kat urged each of us to buy a bouquet of flowers and keep it until the petals turn to dust, to photograph each stage and admire its beauty.

Kat is not naive about loss; in her [TED Talk](#), she discloses that she’s lost siblings to Alzheimer’s and another is in its early stages. And yet she says, “What if I weren’t afraid? How would I treat myself?” Her answer involves



The Gray New Deal

Miriam Kuznets

My first published novel, [The Gray New Deal](#), is appearing as I turn 63. In the novel, seven seniors who shared a college co-op in Austin fifty years ago reunite to create another co-op. Together, this intentional community navigates Trump 1.0 and the first years of the pandemic. They’re a diverse group racially, in economic assets, and in sexual identity. They collaborate on household chores, concocting “econo-meals.” They make friends with younger folks. Sometimes, they share beds. Their hormones may whisper, but their lust for life and for finding ways to cope with grief and aging are loud.

embracing change: Slowing down physically makes room for contemplation, slowing down mentally yields new connections and patterns. Without fear, Kat says, she would be an explorer of her own life.

Kat acknowledges that she herself is ageist, despite all the work she does (“My work is weird as hell,” she told us with glee, thus inspiring me to greater weirdness). Ageism is in the culture and so in us; her mission is to help people break free.

That Age Freely perspective goes beyond rah-rah age positivity. It gets at the heart of what it means to be age-real. The transition from doing to being, the recognition that expansion can happen at the same time as decline, the gratitude for being alive in whatever form that takes, is true wisdom.

Yet I can’t help wondering what the flowers are thinking as they become dust.

While attending the conference I dealt with a recurrence of a medical issue that’s uncomfortable in varying degrees and lacks a clear diagnosis. On good days I’ve felt almost normal, on bad days I’ve

I loved meeting the characters. One of them, for instance, is an Asian Indian-American widower, Vihaan, who used to compete internationally in tennis and who continues to make a bit of money as a rickety tennis pro. If I weren’t a fiction writer, I wouldn’t know Vihaan and how he fares when he reunites with his old buddies.

I generated the idea for *The Gray New Deal* after hearing [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s](#) proposal for a Green New Deal. I’d been thinking about how many seniors can’t afford to retire or to incur medical expenses. Social services such as Medicare and Social Security are among the greatest innovations in our history and are now a safety net full of holes. In my novel, social capital helps knit together the holes. But that’s not enough. Recently, I googled “The Gray New Deal,” and found a prominent economist, Teresa Ghilarducci, who uses the term and proposes that Social Security and Medicare need to be more generous. Right on!

My novel’s subject is timely, and engaging to me as a writer, because more seniors are struggling to make sure they

been miserable (It's like the poet said: "Joy and pain are woven fine"). Being an active participant on my healthcare team has long been [a point of pride](#), but it doesn't instantly solve every medical riddle. What a great lesson in humility (But if you're listening, Universe, I've learned this lesson and it's time to move on).

Dealing with this challenge reminds me that age positivity alone becomes toxic. Living in negativity, embracing ageism, is even more toxic. While finding the middle ground has never been my forté, it's now become essential.

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don't outlive their finances. The [statistics](#) on what people have saved for retirement are frightening. The *New York Times*, The *Guardian*, and CBS News have all published articles on seniors pooling their resources in shared housing and other bartering arrangements. In the *New York Times* article, one situation mentioned is the Women's Housing Initiative Manitoba (WHIM) in which six women from early 60s to in their 80s share a house. Their current favorite show is "Shrinking." They help each other through illnesses, as do my characters in *The Gray New Deal*.

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