

## **When a Writer's Group Facilitates Learning**

The goal seemed simple enough: Share my story, listen and be open to feedback. I shared chapters of a book I'm writing about my long-lost brother Rich. He returned from 'Nam a changed man of twenty-one, deserted by his wife and plagued by a nervous condition. In '70, he and several kindred spirits drove cross-country, seeking communal living in New Mexico. That December, my mother received a cryptic post card from his girlfriend Dee and we haven't heard from her or him ever again.

During my critique session, writer colleagues said I focused on my brother's travels and wanted more from me. In fact, they demanded it. I wasn't sure I could give it. Their questions triggered memories long suppressed.

In reflecting on my memories, a recurring question haunts me: "Could I have done anything to change the outcome of my brother's life?" This question and others are begging to be further explored; more challenging than I thought. I now realize that there's more to my story than what I've chosen to tell. The tables have been turned. What I thought was going to be a story about my brother is really a story about the impact of his life on mine.