



Visiting Writer:

Hope Edelman

Hope Edelman served as UNCW's visiting creative nonfiction writer this spring. She is the author of six nonfiction books, including the bestselling *Motherless Daughters* (Da Capo Press, 1994), which was published in 16 countries and translated into 11 languages. Edelman received her undergraduate degree from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and her graduate degree in nonfiction from the University of Iowa. Currently, she teaches writing at Antioch University in Los Angeles, where she lives with her two daughters and husband. First-year nonfiction student Liz Granger spoke with Edelman about deadline anxiety, marketing, and adjectives.

LG: Before you joined the Iowa Nonfiction Writing Program, you were trained as an undergraduate in journalism. Did you ever dream of becoming *Christiane Amanpour*? What was your journalistic dream for yourself?

HE: I was a terrible news reporter! Seriously, I hated invading other people's personal lives and conflict makes me nauseous. I was much more comfortable writing features. In college I did a series of magazine internships and felt certain I'd become a magazine editor. I always thought I'd land in New York and eventually be a more bohemian and friendlier version of Anna Wintour.

LG: What are three adjectives that describe yourself?

HE: At a deadline – focused, motivated, exhausted. At a work lull, when you have few assignments – balanced, purposeless, well-rested. When you couldn't be busier – organized, efficient, absentminded. When your deadline is months away – falsely confident.

LG: Do you write every day?

HE: No. That would make me crazy. I can't live inside my head that much, and I'm not nearly that disciplined or that driven. Deadlines motivate me. Most of my books are binge-written, meaning that I'll putter around doing research and interviews and everything else except writing for a week or two, and then I'll go away for a weekend and write non-stop for three days. In those three days, I'll produce more pages than I could in two weeks of regular work hours. I need that kind of immersion and removal from my daily responsibilities. It's the reason why writing colonies foster such fine work. Last September, I did a 10-day residency at Hedgebrook writing retreat for women on Whidbey Island, Washington, and I produced some of the best pages there that I've written in years.

LG: You said that anxiety is a key part of your process?

HE: It's the journalism training. I could criticize myself and say that I have the worst time-management practices that I've ever seen in a writer, which may, in fact, be true. I could also say that I was trained to write on-deadline and do my desk work under-the-gun.

LG: How did your agent market *Motherless Daughters*, your bestseller about women who'd lost their mothers at young ages?

HE: My agent was very smart; she sent the book almost exclusively to editors who had lost mothers when they were young. It was the most brilliant agenting move I've ever seen. And she'd been in the industry for long enough and was very personable and well-liked, so she knew personal details about many of the editors that she interacted with. Those editors read the proposal and realized, "Yes, there should be a book. Why has nobody written about it before?"

LG: Have you been noticing any strange patterns lately that might work themselves into your writing? What has been newly entering your consciousness?

HE: My daughters don't want to be written about any more, and my husband has been such a good sport for so many years that he deserves a break. So I've been casting my net much further back into my past and writing pieces set in adolescence and my twenties. College years, when I felt most adrift. My first job, in Knoxville, Tennessee. Graduate school. It's been educational, to put it mildly, to apply my present-day consciousness to some of the decisions I made back then. If I ever pull together a collection of pieces from that time, I should call the collection *It Seemed Like a Good Idea*. 📖

