Chance Particulars
A Writer’s Field Notebook for Travelers, Bloggers, Essayists, Memoirists, Novelists, Journalists, Adventurers, Naturalists, Sketchers, and Other Note-Takers and Recorders of Life
By: Sara Mansfield Taber

The goal of the writer is to live with the keenness of the foreigner. To experience, wide-eyed, the sensations aroused and the events offered up by peculiar surrounds and then to evoke them so brightly on the page that the reader, too, experiences the foreigner’s frisson. A time-honored way this is accomplished is through the keeping of a field notebook—through the faithful recording of the this-and-that of life; the atmospheres and incidents; the bells, the beer, the bread.

Based on what accomplished nonfiction writer Sara Mansfield Taber learned in her many years of field notebook keeping, Chance Particulars is a unique and handy primer for writers who want to use their experiences to tell a lively, satisfying story. Often, writers try to turn their notes into a memoir, essay, travel piece, or story, only to find that they haven’t recorded enough of the concrete, sensory details necessary to create evocative description. To help writers overcome this problem, Taber has composed a true “field notebook for field notebook keepers.” Enhanced by beautiful illustrations, this charming and comprehensive guide is a practical manual for anyone who wishes to learn or hone the crafts of writing, ethnography, or journalism.

Writers of all levels, genres, and ages, as well as teachers of writing, will appreciate this useful tool for learning how to record the details that build vibrant prose. With this book in hand, you will be able to recreate times and places, conjure up intricate character portraits, and paint pictures of particular landscapes, cultures, and locales.

REVIEWS
“Sara Mansfield Taber's Chance Particulars is at once a delicious read and the distilled wisdom of a long-time teacher and virtuoso of the literary memoir. Her powerful lessons will give you rare and vital skills: to be able to read the world around you, and to read other writers, as a writer, that is, with your beadiest conjurer's eye and mammoth heart. This is a book to savor, to engage with, and to reread, again and again.” --C. M. Mayo, author of Miraculous Air: Journey of a Thousand Miles through Baja California, the Other Mexico

“Sara Mansfield Taber has written—in an accessible style and with well-chosen examples—a practical and readable field guide for writers to practice the necessary skills of observation. More than a guide, this is a sketchbook, notebook, and inspirational commonplace book in one, meant to show writers how to make readers walk in their shoes.” --Robin Hemley, Yale-NUS College, author of A Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism, and Travel

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Sara Mansfield Taber is the author of Born Under an Assumed Name: The Memoir of a Cold War Spy’s Daughter, Dusk on the Campo. She has taught writing at Johns Hopkins University, the Bethesda Writer’s Center, and the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Maud Taber-Thomas is a classically trained, Washington, DC–based artist who specializes in oil paintings and charcoal drawings. Her portraits, interiors, and landscapes may be viewed at maudtaber-thomas.com.