

Journal of Tar Heel Tellers

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NC Storytelling Guild
Official Newsletter

A Wild Week in the North Carolina Mountains by Michael Reno Harrell

When I got the email from Dianne Hackworth asking if I would be interested in presenting a five-day long workshop on humor in storytelling, I must say that I experienced mixed emotions. The first was appreciation of the fact that I would be considered adept enough to discuss such a broad subject. The second was delight in realizing that it meant a week in one of the most pristine and remote parts of my beloved Southern Mountains without the constant barrage of electronic media that has become such a distraction in all our lives. And the third was sheer fear in that we were talking about a week's worth of analyzing a subject that is difficult to even define. I couldn't help but recall that wonderful quote by author E. C. White when asked his thoughts on the subject. He replied, "Humor can be dissected as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind." That in itself is discouraging. But, the chance to hang out with a bunch of storytellers outweighed my fears and I decided to jump in.

Have you noticed that storytelling is the only art form in which it is assumed that if you can practice it on any kind of professional level, that you also must be able to teach it as well? One wouldn't expect that of a watercolorist or a curve ball pitcher. Most every storytelling festival that I am invited to asks, not, "Would you care to lead a workshop?" but rather, "What workshop would you like to present?" From this I have, as have many others, worked up material on several subjects. These events usually last from an hour to as many



Front (l to r): Michael Reno Harrell, Janice Del Negro, Frankie Adkins, Lona Bartlett, Donna Marie Todd. Back (l to r): Dorothy Cleveland, Dianne Hackworth, Jim Payne, Fred Powers, Charlotte Ross, Sylvia Payne

as three, although the shorter are much more the norm. This was to be two three hour work sessions a day, as well as critiques afterwards for those attendees who wished to get feedback on a particular piece and all this followed up by evening concerts. Even using all my fingers and toes I had trouble adding all those hours up. How in the world was I going to talk on one subject, especially one so obscure as humor for all that time?

Thank goodness, my old brain finally wormed its way around to the obvious. I was to be in a room with a dozen storytellers. All I had to do was toss any particular ball in the air and then sit back and watch them bat it around. Not only was the week a total gas, but it turned out to be a week of discovery for us all. We each came away with a broader knowledge of not only what makes a story funny, but what makes a story work in general.

The diversity among the troop was amazing. There were folk tales, personal stories, historical pieces, mysteries and legends flying around session after session. I will say that there were no real beginners in the class, not that that would have been a hindrance, but the fact that we all had several metric tons of combined stage experience tended to make the discussions fly pretty high at times. There became a kind of shorthand that made the dialogue flow like mountain rain. I couldn't help using that metaphor, seeing as how we experienced a week's worth of downpour which at times

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JOURNAL OF TAR HEEL TELLERS

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Mission of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild:

- ☉ to celebrate the various cultures of NC,
- ☉ to promote excellence in oral tradition,
- ☉ to foster an appreciation and acceptance of the
art of storytelling,
- ☉ to affirm the value of story and the importance of
story listening,
- ☉ to nourish the development of emerging and
established artists.

Correspondence should be addressed to the editor
and will be considered available for publication, un-
less noted, "not for publication". The editor reserves
the right to revise contributed articles for style and
length.

Spring Cast of Characters

Sylvia Payne - Editor
Contributors,

Lona Bartlett, Michael Reno Harrell, Martha
Reed Johnson, Joan Leotta, Sherry Lovett, Ray
Mendenhall, Connie Regan-Blake and Brian
Sturm.



Here's what's happening with your
storytelling friends around the state!

Congratulations to **Linda Goodman** who was
one of 25 2013 National Storytelling Conference
Mid-Atlantic Regional Showcase presenters . . . Storyteller, **Janet
Harlee**, has just released her new book, *Just A Closer Stumble With
Thee*. It is funny, touching and includes Southern stories about our
not-so-steady walk with the Lord. Go to [http://www.amazon.com/Just-
Closer-Stumble-With-Thee/dp/1482510766/](http://www.amazon.com/Just-Closer-Stumble-With-Thee/dp/1482510766/) to see more . . . The Caroli-
nas will swell with pride this year as we are well represented on stage
at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN in October.
Connie Regan-Blake and **Michael Reno Harrell** will serve as em-
cees. **Donald Davis** returns as a featured well loved regular; **Sheila
Kay Adams** returns and **Tim Lowry** appears as a *New Voice* . . .
Michael Reno Harrell is featured on the cover of the September/
October issue of the magazine, *WNC Mountain Living in Western North
Carolina* . . . Congratulations to **Lona Bartlett**, **Connie Regan-Blake**
and **Donna Marie Todd** who were selected by the Wildacres Confer-
ence Center to participate in their Wildacres Residency Program this
year . . . **Wayne and Jane Sims** researched and performed historical
stories about real life along the coast of Florida during World War II.
Go to: [http://fernandinaobserver.com/2013/08/19/the-storytelling-sims-
talk-about-florida-during-world-war-ii/](http://fernandinaobserver.com/2013/08/19/the-storytelling-sims-talk-about-florida-during-world-war-ii/) for the article . . . **Gale Buck** has
his first book for storytellers out - *The Secret Stories of Santa* and is
available at www.thereindeerplace.com or on Amazon.

Let your heart guide you. It whispers, so listen closely.

- from The Land Before Time

New Discoveries

from the editor's desk

What a busy summer filled with new adventure and discovery,
a reunion in Minnesota, a trip to the Outer Banks and several
refreshing mountain trips. Mixed amid these trips were storytelling
workshops, storytelling venues, a history tour and shop discussions
with storytelling friends. One adventure brought me to discover
two amusing stories. They just unexpectedly fell into my lap. And
an enriching experience of vacationing on Lake Superior brought
home several ideas for a new and eerie story.

I trust the articles, happenings and stories within this Fall issue
might serve as your means to new discoveries. You'll find information
about the Brevard Festival - learn about the featured storytellers,
free workshops and see the festival schedule. Be sure to read Brian
Sturm, Joan Leotta and Ray Mendenhall's articles about storytelling
performance and writing. You'll find a message from our new
President, Sherry Lovett, articles by Lona Bartlett and Martha Reed
Johnson and an article and a story by Michael Reno Harrell and
more. Enjoy. Be inspired!

Submit to:

Sylvia Payne, JTHT Editor, 1621 Nathaniel Street, Newton, NC
28658. E-mail: sylpayne@bellsouth.net

Deadline for Spring 2014 Issue: March 15, 2014.

President's Message by Sherry Lovett

I have been a member of the Guild for several years now and was honored when I was asked to be the president elect, but also nervous. You see, although I have been telling for many years, it hasn't been until recently that I feel I have begun to understand the magnitude of the art of storytelling. It isn't just an art form; it is a way of life, completely intertwined in all that we humans do. We are storytelling machines, and our stories change lives.

My story is that I was once upon a time a middle school teacher, and while many people groan when I tell them that, I must admit that I enjoyed that age group. Yes, they are edgy and in the middle, but never dull, and it was with my students I first began to understand the power of stories. That chapter ended when my daughter was born and I stayed home with her. At that point I began to tell stories professionally because the flexibility of it fit nicely with my decision to be a stay-at-home mom. The next chapter came three years ago when I moved to Little Switzerland, NC near Asheville, a hotbed for storytelling. Over these last three years I have learned much from workshops, mentoring, and just getting out there and telling.

Now, here I am starting a new chapter as the president of the Guild and eager to learn more, eager to see how our story will unfold together this year. I am looking to you to help me tell it. Stories do change lives, so how do we raise

awareness, promote our art, and grow as tellers? I believe it will be through teamwork and camaraderie. It will be by asking how you can help the Guild and how the Guild can help you because ours is a story that requires everyone.

That being said, I would like to know how you feel the Guild could better serve you and the storytelling world. What ideas do you have? How do you think we can grow as an organization? How can we better support and promote the art and the artist? I invite you to share with me your thoughts so that I may bring them before the board. New ideas, new thoughts breathe life into the work we are doing. Please feel free to send me your thoughts via my email at thelovetts3@gmail.com. Please put in the subject line *Ideas for the Guild*.

Stories are powerful and they do change lives, and we are in the business of stories. I am looking forward to sharing this year with you as your president and learning together how we can do this even better, and to the story our Guild will tell this year.



SHERRY LOVETT

(A Wild Week in the NC Mountains ...continued from front



Following an evening session, Donna Marie Todd shares a story

reached Biblical proportions, which only seemed to make hunkering down together all the more bonding.

My pal, the great Andy Offutt Irwin, was to be Teller In Residence at the ISC in Jonesborough that week, so I had buzzed him up in advance and he graciously agreed to hang around after his Wednesday performance and chat with the group. After having spent twenty hours in a car with the guy, I had no doubts about his grasp of the subject and he didn't disappoint. The drive to Jonesborough through the mountains and back through torrents of rain and curtains of

fog were alone fodder for a whole festival's worth of stories.

Wildacres is a treat to visit under any circumstances. For those who have never had the opportunity to visit the retreat, it's worth the drive up there just to experience the place. Be prepared to turn your steering wheel when you leave the valley and begin to climb. My mother once commented on a particular stretch of mountain road very much like NC 226. She said, "They must have pinched a snake's tail and followed it up the mountain with a bulldozer to build this road." But, I promise that it is worth the effort to make the trip. The facilities are warm and comfortable, the views are breathtaking and the food is first rate. There is a spacious cafeteria, cozy rooms, a library, a pottery workshop, a wonderful theater, hiking trails and even a snack bar. I guarantee that you will not be bored should you decide to take advantage of one of their programs. There are retreats for potters, stonemasons, writers, saxophonists,



Fred "Powerhouse" Powers takes the stage to share his close call working in the coal mines of West Virginia.



Folklorist and author, Janice Del Negro, and Sherry Lovett take a break during late night sharing time.

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Stories EVERYWHERE!!

by Martha Reed Johnson

Oh the places I've been this year! . . . In January I started with Andy Offutt Irwin and a bunch of bold face liars in Laurinburg, NC. Alan Hoal took home the Golden Shovel with his



Alan Hoal

hilarious tale of a gerbil bound for outer space; I laughed so hard my face hurt for days.

In March I "traveled" to South Africa and got

caught in the midst of a knife fight, hung out with Sean Connery, strolled through time with Ricky Nelson, took a carriage ride in Charleston with the wackiest tour guide ever, sailed to castles beyond on a flying ship, learned how to never eat liver and onions, hung out with John Henry and his wife, and relaxed on the front porch with Ma Bell talking on the first phone with a banjo picking, harmonica playing trouble maker.

What a week! All that right here in my home state of South Carolina! My adventures began Saturday at the inaugural "Charleston Tells!" festival with Barbara McBride Smith, Syd Lieberman, Ed Stivender, Sharon Cooper-Murray, Hawk Hurst, Donna Washington and Tim Lowry, and ended Thursday at the Newberry Opera House sharing a stage with John Fowler, Ray Mendenhall and Millie Chaplin.



Barbara McBride Smith

Hawk Hurst's travels to South Africa where his quick thinking storytelling mind and musical talent saved his friend from a knife to the throat, and Donna Washington's story of her father's ability

to use story, humor and a bit of acting to disarm the threats of racism during the 70's left me thinking about the ways we teach tolerance and conflict resolution in our schools. Perhaps what we really need in schools in order to create a more peaceful world is simply a stronger emphasis on the arts and storytelling. Perhaps the arts should be the core of what we teach rather than the "extra-curricular" activities deemed less important and less funded than other subjects. Perhaps more money spent early on the arts would translate to less money later for defense, law enforcement and corrections.

Tim Lowry's story of the back yard zoo in Orangeburg has stuck in my mind all year. The words of the zookeeper haunt me, "Don't wait 30 years to do what you love!" Am I doing what I love? How can I do more of what I love and less of what I do simply to pay the bills? These are questions that probably plague many of us.

April took me to the "Storytelling Festival of Carolina" in Laurinburg, North Carolina and I had the opportunity to bring 40 of my middle school students to their first ever storytelling festival. My two worlds merged, school counselor by day and storyteller by night, and we were all the better for it. As I loaded students on the bus I wondered if they'd ever want to hear my stories again after hearing the tales of Reverend Robert Jones, Barbara McBride-Smith, Willie Clafin and Bil Lepp. What I found was that they became hooked on stories and now wanted to hear more of my stories, and I theirs. An incredible bond was formed of which we'll be telling stories about for decades to come.

Where to next? . . . The North Carolina Writers Conference Backporch Stories with Tyris Jones and Michael Reno Harrell was the next stop. Sharing the stage with these two powerhouse tellers was a highlight of my year.

Michael's story, "Greyhound Bus" is now played repeatedly in my classrooms as we all ponder the value of where we've been, where we want to go and the education we'll get along the way.

Stories can take you EVERYWHERE!! And stories stick in our minds, making us think – long after the story is told.

Stories transport us and dissolve the stress of the daily details of life. Stories connect us to strangers and friends in our often disconnected world where a screen and a status update serve as a poor substitute for human connection.

So my thanks go out to the Charleston Public Library, the South Carolina Storytelling Network, the North Carolina Storytelling Guild, the Storytelling and Arts Center of the Southeast, the North Carolina Writers Guild and all the tellers I've heard this year for bringing stories and transformation to my world and the world of my students.

Stories are meant to be told and heard. Find a storytelling festival or event near you and be transformed!!

And if you're looking to try out your story telling skills, hear a great tale or just hang around story minded friends, come to the Clay Pot Coffee Shop on Dargan Street in Florence, SC on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:00pm for **The sToRy sWaP!** More information available at www.marthareedjohnson.com . . . I hope to see you there!!

As a middle school counselor Martha Reed Johnson has over 25 years of experience working with youth and families. She is a master at finding, creating and telling amazing stories from ordinary moments.

Brevard Storytelling Fest 2013



North Carolina Storytelling Guild

Sponsored by:
Friends of the
Transylvania County Library
& North Carolina Storytelling Guild



Festival Schedule

Friday, November 1

7:30 - 8:30 pm- Festival Kick-off performance with **Angela Lloyd** and **Bobby Norfolk**

Saturday, November 2

9:00 - 10:30 am- Workshop presented by Bobby Norfolk: **Compelling Characters** - A wizard at conjuring life-like and unforgettable characters, Bobby will help you find your own voice through your storytelling. Bobby shows you how to use voice, gesture, movement and sound effects to enhance your stories. This workshop will give you the keys to add new dimensions to your style, make your storytelling appeal to audiences of all ages, enrich your performances and learn to tell your own story.

11:00 am - 12:30 pm- Workshop presented by Angela Lloyd: **Coming to Our Senses: Bringing the Story to Life** - Geared for all levels of experience, this workshop takes the structure of the fairy tale or folk tale and leads participants in the exploration of the role of narrator and ways to bring the story world to life. Landscapes, events and characters are drawn closer when we use our direct experience and five senses.

1:30 - 4:30 pm- Afternoon Family Concert featuring **Bobby Norfolk** and **Angela Lloyd**; NCSG Regional Tellers: Dorothy Kirk, Alan Hoal, Donna Marie Todd; and Library Youth Tellers.

6:30 - 9:15 pm- Evening Concert featuring **Angela Lloyd** and **Bobby Norfolk**; NCSG Regional Tellers: Dorothy Kirk, Alan Hoal, Donna Marie Todd.

November 1 & 2

Angela Lloyd
(Victorville, CA)

Bobby Norfolk
(St. Louis, MO)

Alan Hoal
(Cary, NC)

Dorothy Kirk
(Tryon, NC)

Donna Marie Todd
(Black Mountain, NC)

Special guest MC
Gwenda Ledbetter
(Asheville, NC)

Free Admission

FRIDAY Nov. 1: Headliners Concert 7:30 PM
SATURDAY Nov. 2: AM Workshops; Afternoon & Evening Performances

Transylvania County Library
212 S. Gaston St., Brevard, NC
INFO: 828 884-3151 ext 3 or 828 274-1123
Complete Festival Schedule online: <http://library.transylvaniacounty.org>

About the Storytellers

Bobby Norfolk is an internationally known story performer and teaching artist. He is a three-time Emmy Award winner and Parents' Choice honoree and one of the most popular and dynamic story-educators in America today. Bobby is well known for his vibrant characters who come to life through dynamic movement and astounding vocal effects. He is the 2009 recipient of the Circle of Excellence Oracle Award, presented by the National Storytelling Network for artists' exceptional commitment and exemplary contributions to the art of storytelling. Bobby's book, *The Moral of the Story: Folktales for*

Character Development is a popular reference handbook for using story in the classroom.

Angela Lloyd, one of the unique performers on the national storytelling circuit today, has been a featured teller at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee and regularly appears at festivals and theatres across the country. A virtuosa on Washboard, Angela's performances are a whimsical braid of poetry, story and song played on

(continued on page on page 7)

Coping with the Jitters by Brian Sturm

You walk up on stage, confident that you know your story and ready to “wow” your audience. Suddenly, you look out at your assembled audience, and your mouth goes dry, or your hands or knees start to shake, or your voice grows tremulous or goes up an octave. Sweat beads your brow, your eyes take on a haunted look, and terror bubbles up from deep within you as your story vanishes into the winds. Yes! You’ve been there at some point, and we all know that these are possible symptoms of that common performers’ condition called stage fright.

Stage fright, also known as performance anxiety, affects people of all experience levels. I have a theory that a central component of stage fright is the feeling in the performer of a need to impress the audience. The more we care about what the audience thinks of us, the more likely we are to have stage fright. While it may seem odd to advocate for caring less about your storytelling, if you suffer from stage fright, you *may* be able to mitigate it by decreasing your focus on the *reception* of your story and refocusing your attention on the delivery. This is extremely difficult in storytelling, as teachers and coaches stress the importance of eye contact...and eye contact is perhaps the most scary component of storytelling there is. With eye contact, we become the channels for emotional energy from our story characters to our audiences. This is marvelous, as it allows our listeners to feel the emotions in our stories and experience them more deeply, but it is also scary, as this conduit opens up our emotional vulnerabilities and exposes us emotionally to possible scorn and ridicule from our audiences.

Imagine your two story characters who are deeply in love. One turns to the other and says, “I love you so much.” This is the moment that most novice storytellers will look at the floor or the back wall...anywhere but at an audience member because it is frightening to look at a stranger and say “I love you” so convincingly that the

listener *feels* what it is truly like to be on the receiving end of that statement.

As a novice teller with stage fright, then, you may be able to shield your emotions from your audience enough that the stage fright diminishes. Pretend that the fourth wall between you and the audience is present, forget about them, and focus on your story. I do NOT advocate this for more advanced tellers, as connection with your audience is vital to storytelling success in my opinion, but for beginners suffering from stage fright, caring less about – and distancing yourself a bit from – the audience may help because it allows you to visualize your story so completely that the audience disappears. If you read my article in the last journal about the “Veil of Story” and eye contact, the first stage during which the veil is solidly between you and the audience is the most comfortable for limiting stage fright.

I mentioned above some of the symptoms of stage fright, but I have found that my students tend to show their nerves in one of several ways.

1. They lock their elbows to their sides in an attempt to steady their hands and end up gesturing in tiny circles. A cure for this is to make sure to include one “shoulder gesture” (a movement that requires the whole arm to move at the shoulder joint). This releases tension from the whole body, expands the lungs, and “opens” the body to being a conduit between the story and the audience.

2. They tighten their facial muscles leading to a lack of facial expression and a tight-lipped, closed-mouth performance that is difficult to understand. Again, this is an unwillingness to express your emotional vulnerability, as our faces convey much of our emotional tone. Tightening the face creates a *mask-like* appearance behind which we can hide. Before going on stage, take a few moments in private to exercise your entire face. Make funny faces, much as you did as a child,



and pull, squint, and scrunch your face into as many bizarre shapes as you can. This will release the tension and allow your face to express emotions more normally.

3. If they are sitting down, their foot shakes back and forth, and if they are standing they pace or lock their legs. Similar to #1 above, this is the body’s way of coping with stress. A potential cure, available even in a crowded room is the “total body clench.” As your turn to tell a story nears and your stress level rises, tighten every possible muscle in your body: ball your fists, tighten your biceps, grip your tummy muscles, tighten your buttocks, clench your legs, and curl your toes. Hold that for about 3 seconds and then relax. Do this several times before your performance. It will use up some adrenalin, slow your racing heart, and allow you to relax on your way to tell your story. You can do this easily without drawing any attention to yourself at all.

4. They walk up on stage and dive straight into their story, which doesn’t allow the audience time to get used to their voices and prepare to listen. I tell my students that they should always have a short introduction to their storytelling performances. It can be a 2-minute anecdote about themselves,

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(Coping with...continued from page 6)

a comment about the weather, something that happened on their way to the gig, or some other bridging mechanism, but they need a transition into their stories. This establishes a rapport with the audience, lightens the mood a bit, and eases the audience from the realm of conversation and everyday life into the realm of the story and your characters' world.

So the next time you approach the stage and you feel the dreaded symptoms accumulating, do a total body clench before taking the stage and sip some warm water to ease dry mouth (not cold water and definitely not soda or other sugared drinks), then breathe deeply, use a shoulder gesture to open your body up, start with a short introductory rapport builder, and then focus on your story and have fun!

Brian is an associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science (SILS). He may be contacted at sturm@ils.unc.edu

(A Wild Week in...continued from page 3) interpretive dance and a world of other subjects offered. There is even a week called "Try It On" which allows the attendee to sample several disciplines.

But all that being said, go for the storytelling week known as Wild Week. Dianne and all involved make sure that stories are the main focus. It is a chance to discover, learn, try out new material and create. I don't know what the specific topic for next year's session is to be, but whatever it turns out to be it will be a week of delving into the heart of story. The only drawback to a week there is having to leave. I miss it already.

Michael Reno Harrell is an award winning songwriter, as well as a veteran storyteller and entertainer, and he's from the Southern Appalachian Mountains. He led a fascinating Wild Week Storytelling Workshop at Wildacres in July. You may contact him at mike@michaelreno.com.

(About the Storytellers...continued from page 5)

Autoharp, Tenor Guitar, Spoon and Bell. The stories are selected from a variety of sources including traditional world folktales, the oral tradition, stories of personal experience, and the best in children's literature, i.e. (Carl Sandburg's Rootabaga Stories, the poetry of A. A. Milne, Naomi Shihab Nye). The songs are drawn from her childhood, contemporary singer/songwriters, folk songs, along with her original musical compositions based on the poetry of e.e. cummings, A. A. Milne, and Pablo Neruda.

Dorothy Kirk is a native North Carolinian living in Tryon who became a storyteller as a result of taking singing lessons when she retired. She tells how in her story *Singing Changed My Life Twice*. Her storytelling career began with the creation of her one woman show *Hold Still I Can't See Myself*, which she has performed in Asheville, Salisbury and Tryon with upcoming performances in Columbia, SC and Palm Springs, CA. Dorothy's stories are full of heart and wit and the unique characters from her own life that listeners learn to embrace along with her.

Alan Hoal is an energetic and animated storyteller who has taken home many awards including a shelf full of Tall Tale competition trophies. His stories range from the heartwarming to the hilarious to the frightening. An avid

supporter of storytelling, Alan does more than perform. He has produced several storytelling festivals over the last 13 years. He has just released his first CD, *Why I Don't Fish Anymore*.

Donna Marie Todd, known as the *Singer of Stories*, grew up in the Appalachian mountains of West Virginia where stories are a way of life. Her former professional experience in writing, editing, classical singing, and theater all paved the way for her to return to her storytelling roots. Her stories are finely crafted, moving, original works of art filled with fascinating characters and woven together with song. She is a popular repeat performer in several annual festivals as well as a gifted teaching artist in the southeast region.

Special Festival Guest MC, Gwenda Ledbetter has taught and told stories for fifty years, beginning her work in Asheville's Pack Library and in "Tales from the Red Rocker" on WLOS-TV. Called a pioneer in the storytelling movement, she has told many times at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee since 1979. Gwenda is the recipient of the 2006 Circle of Excellence Oracle Award from the National Storytelling Association and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the North Carolina Storytelling Guild.

We hope to see you there!



Rodney Kemp, emcee & storyteller

OCRA FOLK FESTIVAL 2013

A fun-filled festival (June) on Ocracoke Island featured great musicians and storytellers.



Donald Davis, storyteller & singer
JTHT 7

On The Beach

by Michael Reno Harrell

She parked her old Volvo in the public lot at Huntington Beach State Park and sat there in the late morning sun listening to the Tams on a cassette her nephew had burned her from her vast vinyl collection of 60's beach music. She finished her Winston, opened the car door and raked the fire off onto the asphalt, then dropped the butt into the ashtray with at least a half dozen packs worth of its deceased kin. Switching off the ignition she reached for her beach bag on the passenger seat and tugged at the door handle. The hinges creaked and groaned as she pushed the rusted door open with her bare foot and climbed out onto the warm pavement.

She opened the trunk and rummaged around among plastic fishing tackle boxes, bag chairs and grocery sacks full of empty aluminum cans and grabbed the handle of her paint box. The canvas board that she had bought the week before had a stain on one corner from a leaking bottle of transmission fluid, but she figured that she could incorporate it into the sunrise scene that she had in mind to work on. The folding easel was finally found hiding behind the tire that nice man had changed for her last spring. She noticed that the tire still had the roofing nail nestled there in what was left of the tread. She would need to stop off at a station and get that fixed one of these days.

She walked across the dunes and turned north toward the Murrells Inlet jetty. It was late October and hardly a soul was on the beach. She could see the tracks where a couple of fishermen had dragged their carts of gear that way earlier, but save for a few tourists looking for shells down toward Litchfield, she had the whole expanse of sand to herself.

She set up her easel and clipped the canvas board to it so the morning breeze wouldn't send it flying. She dug around in her bag and found the cover that she had torn from the Myrtle Beach Vacation Guide and a clothespin and clipped the cover to the edge of the canvas board. On the cover was a photograph of a glorious sunrise over the Atlantic. Knowing that she would never get out of bed in time to experience such a sight first hand, she had snagged the cover shot at the motel where she worked during the season so that she could copy the artwork.

She unscrewed the cap from a tube of indigo blue paint and squeezed an inch of the goo onto her pallet. Selecting a brush, she dabbed at the paint, squinted seaward and began to inscribe the horizon across the board. As she reloaded her brush she noticed the thermos in her beach bag and, taking the handle of the brush in her teeth, poured a cup of the Bloody Mary that she had mixed before leaving her trailer. She had blended in just enough tomato juice to tinge the vodka a weak pink. She had remembered to add a healthy dash of Tabasco, but no celery stalk. Hey, you can't think of everything.

She took a healthy sip of the concoction and decided another Winston was in order. She turned her back to the wind and spun the wheel of her Bic, trying to get the darn thing to fire. No luck. She ducked close behind the canvas board, but still no flame. This was no good. She stood up and looked around the beach and decided to cross over the dunes and see if she could find enough shelter from the breeze to get the lighter to do its thing. She climbed past the "Do Not Walk On Dunes. Sea Oats Are Fragile" sign

and, tripping on a piece of wire from an old section of sand fence, she went rolling bum over tea kettle to the bottom of the dune.

Spitting sand and cussing a streak of blue to match the single line on her canvas, she sat up and shook the sand from her hair. A rather large bird was sitting just yards away and flapped its wings but didn't fly away. It was concentrating on what appeared to be a tangle of rotting fishing net or old canvas.

She slowly got to her feet, Winston still in her lips, Bic still tucked in her fist and, once more spun the lighter's wheel. Bingo! She sucked in a lungful of tobacco smoke, held it deep inside for a couple of seconds and as she exhaled she noticed that the big bird a few yards away was holding something in its mouth that sparkled like a diamond in the sunlight. She took a tentative step in the bird's direction in order to get a better look.

The animal stood its ground as she took several more steps toward it. Finally she was but a few feet away. She squatted almost face to face with the creature and peered at the glittering object in its beak. My god, it was a diamond. A diamond ring...and it was on a finger!

Happy Halloween!

See page 7 - at the end of Michael's article for more about him. You may contact him at mike@michaelreno.com.

Articles, stories, and storytelling news are needed for the Spring 2014 *Journal of Tar Heel Tellers*.

Include storytelling events open to the public. Events will be included on our website 'Events' page at <http://www.ncstoryguild.org/events.html>

Deadline: March 15, 2014



Do you have material that you would like to see reviewed? If so, simply send us a complimentary copy and watch upcoming issues for your review.

Storytelling in Syria By Muna Imady

126 pages 12.95 MSI Press (January 6, 2012)
ISBN-10: 1933455098, ISBN-13: 978-1933455099

This slim volume is a perfect example of the old adage that good things come in small packages. In this case, great things. Not only are we able, through Imady's careful research and strong simple writing to sample the cultural heritage through folk tales we are given the gift of recipes, jokes, and favorite sayings of the Prophet so we can savor the greater flavor of Syria, region by region.

Her organization of the tales by governmental entity underscores the differences as well as the overall connections of diverse parts of a country many of us know little about except as a whole. Her book takes us into the homes of the people, now caught in the political crossfire of the current rebellion and reminds us of the human connections among us all.

I often tell Middle Eastern tales and Imady has given me and all who read her book, permission to tell the tales in oral performance as long as

she and her book are properly credited. It's quite apparent in the way she has captured these tales, told to her in her native Arabic, and then translated into English, that Imady is a master of English usage. Her style is simple and elegant, retaining the flavor of a tale shared, perhaps in the kitchen while making the very dishes she tempts us with the recipes offered, or at the table while enjoying these masterpieces of lamb courses and other Syrian delights. Sharing meals with family, with visitors, with friends, is a "sacred" experience in my own heritage culture (Italian) and all over the Middle East. Imady generously shares the meal and the conversation (by way of the tales) with us.

One of my favorite childhood memories is going to a Syrian owned restaurant in Pittsburgh. After the dinner (usually a lamb dish for me) the owner, a friend of my

grandmother would allow me to select a pastry from the front counter case for dessert, always as a gift to take home. Imady's book of stories is like

that counter of sweets—delights for the reader to take into his/her heart and for a teller to share with others.

This is a must for anyone who tells tales from this region of the world or who simply has an interest. I own several books of tales from this region and found stories here that I had not heard before. The sayings and riddles she offers are great additions to any story program (again, be sure to give proper credit if you do.) "Like" her page on Facebook (Syrian Folktales, Muna Imady) to follow this marvelous teacher of (and writer in) English and scholar and sharer of Syrian folklore.

Joan Leotta is the author of *Giulia Goes to War* (release date July 2012 from *Desert Breeze Publishing*). 910-575-0618
www.joanleotta.com
Blog: www.joanleotta.wordpress.com
www.joanleotta.blogspot.com

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WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH OUR STORYTELLERS

APPALACHIAN BESTIARY

Sylva, NC - Gary Carden's new book release was celebrated at The City Lights Bookstore in



Cover illustration

Sylva NC. Gary, author of *Appalachian Bestiary*, and illustrator, Mandy Newham-Cobb were on hand recently to greet visitors and to autograph their book. In the book, Gary talks about "wondrous creatures that run the gamut from whimsy to spine-tingling terror," creatures that are found in Appalachian folklore.



One of many illustrations in Gary's publication: called "The Snipe."

http://www.citylightsnc.com/search/apachesolr_search/gary%20carden

GRANT AWARDED

Waxhaw, NC - The National Storytelling Network recently awarded a grant to Janice Davin for a project called Teacher-Tellers for the 21st Century. The purpose of this project is to create a school-wide community of teachers who value storytelling in education. Congratulations Janice!

INDUCTED INTO THE FRANK PORTER GRAHAM HONOR SOCIETY

Chapel Hill, NC - Dr. Brian Sturm, associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science (SILS), was inducted into the Frank Porter Graham Honor Society. Sturm, who has been a member of the SILS faculty since 1998, was selected because of his many outstanding contributions to graduate and professional education at SILS and to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, as well as his generous gifts of time, effort and talents to the community.

Dr. Sturm specializes in storytelling and children's literature and received the [SILS award for Teaching Excellence in 2002](#). He has been, over the years, nominated for the School's award for his teaching. He has also been nominated for the [Association for Library and Information Science Education \(ALISE\) Teaching Award](#).

SUMMER FOR WRITING

Calabash, NC - "This summer was a good one for writing. Book Two of my Legacy of Honor Series, *Letters from Korea*, came out. (It's an ebook only, Amazon has it.) An essay of mine has been accepted by Chicken Soup for the Soul and will be included in their October edition: *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Miraculous Messages from Heaven*."

- Joan Leotta

HISTORICAL MURRAY'S MILL FUNDRAISER



Sylvia Payne, Cynthia Brown, Trish Dumser and Terry Rollins

Newton, NC - The Catawba County Museum Historical Association sponsored a fund-raising dinner, *Tales Under the Mill Moon*, to help maintain historical Murray's Mill in Newton, NC. The event

was held on the attractive grounds of the mill itself and inside a portion of the mill. Four storytellers, Cynthia Brown, Trish Dumser, Terry Rollins and Sylvia Payne entertained a 'sell out' crowd.

MOVING MOUNTAINS

Asheville, NC - "Well, they say you can't move mountains, but Sheila Kay Adams - ballad singer, storyteller, author and recording artist



Sheila Kay Adams

-has certainly moved the Appalachian Mountains into the greater American consciousness. Last week the National Endowment for the Arts named Sheila a recipient of the National Heritage Fellowship, recognizing her artistic excellence and contributions to our nation's traditional arts heritage. I am so proud of my long time friend! And I am delighted that honoring Sheila Kay also shines the light on Appalachian culture and storytelling." - Connie Regan Blake

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Charlotte, NC - "I want to thank folks who have sent cards or left messages regarding my recovery from the transplant. I'm doing well and getting stronger every day. With my doctor's permission, I plan to return to the storyteller's path after the first of next year."

- Wright Clarkson

NEW TRIO

Asheville, NC - David Holt recently formed a new band; a trio called Sutton, Holt and Coleman, which evolved through their common bond with the legendary Doc Watson. This trio of friends recently released a new CD called *Ready for the Times*. All three artists have won Grammys with Doc Watson.

Dressing up Builds Character by Ray W. Mendenhall

Every storyteller knows that good characters make a good story. Good beginnings, middles and ends need good characters running around to make them work. Good plots rely on good characters to pull them off. The more you can enhance the characters and what the audience understands about them, the better the story works. Describing your character or “dressing them up” as I like to call it is an art and calls for careful consideration and focus. You don’t want to say too much, heaping layer upon layer of description upon them, that just frustrates the audience and slows the story down, but you do want to say enough to bring them to life. A few well chosen words which convey attributes and characteristics are an important part of every story. I love to utilize Aesop’s fables as an example of this. Aesop’s fables are bare-bone stories, almost philosophical

sayings, but add a bit of description to the characters and they can be delightful stories. Take the story of the boy who cried wolf. By simply describing the boy in a bit of brief detail can make the story live. So what kind of boy is he? Is he mischievous or malicious? Bad or just bored? A practical joker or mean spirited? Some kind of description can explain his actions and give the story depth.

There is an Eskimo tale, I found recently, about a sea witch who is the mother and protector of the seals, walruses and whales. She begins as a young maiden beautiful and fair and quite vain, but during the course of the story through a mishap she loses her fingers so that she cannot comb her hair and falls to the depths of the ocean to become a witch. To win her favor and good hunting, some brave hunter must go down into the sea to find her and

comb her hair until it is soft and smooth. To emphasize in the beginning of the story great vanity about her hair helps the story make sense and connects the beginning to the end. Hence a bit of careful description makes the story more consistent and therefore better.

A kind hearted tailor who is rewarded for his kindness, a well-meaning fool whose foolishness turns out alright, a poor but honest man who is rewarded for his honesty, a boastful buffoon who gets his come uppings; simple description and carefully placed adjectives can turn a good story into a great and thoughtful tale. All it takes is a bit of creative thinking and the judicious use of descriptive words in “dressing” your character right.

Ray Mendenhall is President of the South Carolina Storytelling Network and past President of the NC Storytelling Guild. He may be contacted at rwmend@juno.com

Toe River Storytelling Festival - Two Sides of the Coin by Sherry Lovett

I am a storyteller (at least I’m trying to be), and for the last two years I have been one of the main organizers for the Toe River Storytelling Festival. This year made me really think about these two roles. Honestly, I’d rather be telling. But if we lose our festivals, we are losing an important venue for our art. Toe River was about to disappear, but there were a couple of us who wanted to keep it alive, so I stepped into the role of organizer and it has been an eye-opener in many ways. This year as we were a couple of weeks away with epic rain and flooding that was forcing us to change our venue and money issues, I was thinking, I don’t think I want to wear this hat... So here is a chart comparing being a teller with being an organizer, both necessary and, perhaps, both possible.

Being a Teller

- You look for stories that are meaningful.
- You read, and read, and read.
- You practice by telling, and telling, and telling.
- You show up at your gigs and stand before an audience and share the art of storytelling in whatever form it takes.
- You get paid.
- You manage your business.
- You promote your business.
- You mostly work alone with sole control over what you are doing.
- At the end of the day you feel good about the work you are doing and hope you get to do more of it.

Being a Festival Organizer

- You meet with a board. A lot.
- You plan for the festival.
- You work on fund-raising to pay for the event.
- You contact tellers and negotiate fees and work out contracts.
- You line-up venues and tents and chairs and potties and sound and vendors and...
- You spread the word through social media, signs, radio, ads...
- The day arrives and you make sure checks are ready, refreshments for the tellers are ready and you bite your nails when the seats don’t look full enough and when a teller slides in five minutes before the set is to start.
- At the end of the day you smile at all the stories shared, the audience smiling, and you think, yeah, I’ll do this again.



A Little Quiet in the Woods *A Wildacres Residency by Lona Bartlett*

“Oh, to go away by myself to write would be wonderful. Getting away from the distractions of everyday life just to get my thoughts and my childhood stories on paper would give me the opportunity to gain direction.” How many times I wanted some focus time away from the phone, the TV and even the clicking clock on my wall. In my heart I thought I might be able to swing an inexpensive hotel for a few days so I could hide away and be alone with my thoughts, at least as much as you can in a hotel with other people walking the halls.

About 3 years ago I found out about the Artist in Residence program at the Wildacres Retreat Center in Little Switzerland, NC. I looked over the

application and I didn't apply because I felt my project would not be good enough to even be considered for such an amazing program. My thought was, “all I want to do is get my family farm stories on paper”. A couple of years went by and still I had not had the opportunity to get away to that inexpensive hotel alone. After some encouragement from a friend, some long deep breaths and the acknowledgement of ‘they might say yes’, I applied. And I'll be dog gone if they didn't say, “Welcome to Wildacres”. I danced in my living room and sang an ‘oh, yeah’ song to no one but myself.

In July I was given the key to an exquisite cabin in the woods that would be my personal sanctuary for my stay at Wildacres. When I walked in the front door I stood for a few moments to savor the gift that I have been entrusted with. The cabin walls were all adorned with knotty pine, the same type that were on the walls of my mother's kitchen. The bed had on it a comfortable quilt and all of the furniture was handmade.

There was an upstairs loft, high ceilings and a full kitchen area. A screened in porch was just off from the kitchen with chairs for relaxing and thinking. I whispered, “oh, my, gosh”. Meals were supplied in the cafeteria and any food items served I could take back with me for later. I was treated as though I were one of a kind, like they wanted me there, like I was an honored guest.

The time alone in my cabin was invaluable. There was no TV, no clock ticking, I didn't even turn on the radio or play music, the reception for my phone was limited at best. I embraced the stillness, it was comforting. I accomplished so much, 23 pages of hand written notes, 18 pages of type, I read an entire book. I met new friends and even saw a black bear.

I applied, grace was on my side, I was given a gift I could not afford, grateful is what I will remain for a lifetime.

Lona Bartlett currently serves on the NCSG Board as Ex-Officio Chair. As a storyteller and puppeteer, her puppet creations now span four continents. She may be contacted at lonabartlett@att.net

Arc of the Story *by Joan Leotta*

I love to think about the flow of a telling. It's the same principal I apply when writing fiction. There is more to a story than beginning, middle (at least three points of action) and the end.

The beginning of the story is not just a time to describe the situation. The story needs to have drawing in, a pull to emotion and action interspersed with a bit of humor and audience activity (such as call and response) and then release.

During the middle of the story, the action points, I plan out the balance of humor, pathos and adventure. Sometimes when writing down the elements of a story I intend to tell, I plot

these elements on a piece of paper, not a real graph, but it might look like one upon quick glance. I am too math-impaired to do real graphs. I just know that I want an ebb and flow in my story. I want my audience to feel good at the start, and that if I take them to a deep emotional place; I want to temper that with humor. When I want to include audience participation in the arc, I find several places for it, draw or make the appropriate props and see how that participation might affect timing, my arc, and the story itself... What will the audience gain by participating? How will their participation affect the story?

Finally, the end of the story comes. The story winds down. I want to release them back into the real world with a sense of joy, balance, and/or satisfaction that justice has been done. I apply this same principal to putting a program together—a little humor, a little relaxation, a little of this and a bit of that to put together a program that will take the audience on a journey with me through a new culture, through several emotions and leave them encouraged, enthusiastic and hopefully wanting to retell my tales.

About Joan Leotta - Refer to her article on page 9.



NCSG Events:

November 2013

November 1-2: NCSG Brevard Storytelling Festival.

Featuring master storytellers Angela Lloyd and Bobby Norfolk; also NC Regional tellers Alan Hoal, Dorothy Kirk and Donna Marie Todd. Transylvania County Public Library, 212 South Gaston St., Brevard, NC.

January 2014

January 24-26: NCSG's Winter Workshop, with master storyteller Andy Offutt Irwin. To be held on the grounds of the Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC. Contact [Terry Rollins](mailto:Terry.Rollins@ncsl.org) or [Dianne Hackworth](mailto:Dianne.Hackworth@ncsl.org).

Spring 2014

NCSG's Spring Retreat. Storytelling Workshop to be held at the Wildacres Retreat Center, Little Switzerland, NC. Contact dianne@diannehackworth.com. Details later.

Other Storytelling Events:

September 30-October 3: Teller in Residence: Live concerts with Donald Davis. Mary B. Martin storytelling Hall in downtown Jonesborough, TN. Go to <http://www.storytellingcenter.net/news/2013-teller-in-residence-lineup-announced/> or call 800-952-8392, ext. 222 for tickets.

October 2013

October 4-6: National Storytelling Festival. Featuring some of the very best, including Donald Davis, Sheila Kay Adams and Tim Lowry from the Carolinas. Also Bil Lepp, Syd Lieberman, Geraldine Buckley, Milbre Burch and others. Downtown Jonesborough, TN. <http://www.storytellingcenter.net/festival/>

October 12: Storytelling at Fletcher Feed & Seed.

Storytellers supplied by Asheville Story Circle and STEAP, Inc. 3-5pm. 3715 Hendersonville Road (at intersection of Hwy 25 and Fanning Bridge Road), Fletcher, NC 28732. Site contact 828-216-3492; www.feedandseednc.org

October 18: Every Inch a Gentleman, with Storyteller, Tim Lowry. 3:00pm, Timrod Library, 217 Central Avenue, (downtown) Summerville, SC. Contact 843-871-4600.

October 18-21: Connie Regan-Blake's StoryWindow presents a Storytelling Workshop: "Taking Your Story to the Stage" in Asheville, NC. Includes feedback, critique and the opportunity to perform on stage at The Altamont Theater. Come with a story that is almost "stage ready." Workshop is open only to returning students. Details: www.storywindow.com or call 828-258-1113.

October 19: SEVEN! World Folk Tales - Storyteller Tim Lowry presents international folk stories perfect for children ages 4 and up. Two performances with FREE admission, York County (SC) Libraries: Lake Wylie Branch Library at 11:00 am and the Fort Mill Branch Library at 3:00 pm. For more info call your local library.

(October continued):

October 19: Ghost Stories at Historic Brattonsville, Rock Hill, SC. Come tour the historic plantation by lantern light as costumed guides tell tales of 19th century mystery and suspense. Storyteller Tim Lowry will be telling tales from his new CD "Getting the Creeps" at the campfire as you wait for your guided tour to begin. For tickets and more information [CLICK HERE](#).

October 19: 12th Annual Hagood Mill Storytelling Festival. Hagood Mill Road, Pickens, SC. 10am - 4pm. Featuring: Derrick Phillips, Ellouise Schoettler, Martha Reed Johnson with Storyteller-in-Residence/Host John Thomas Fowler. The gristmill will be running throughout the day. Fresh stone-ground corn meal, grits and wheat flour will be available. Enjoy a variety of folklife and traditional arts demonstrations. Bring your favorite chair. Cost: Free. Contact: Pickens County Museum at 864-898-5963 or the Hagood Mill at 864-898-2936 or by email at picmus@co.pickens.sc.us

October 20: Connie Regan-Blake's "StoryWindow" presents "A SLICE OF LIFE." Come enjoy an evening of stories featuring six tellers from the Academy's "Taking Your Story to the Stage" workshop. [The Altamont Theater](#) in downtown Asheville, Sunday October 20 at 7:00 pm, for adults and teenagers, \$5 admission.

October 25: Musician and Storyteller Michael Reno Harrell will be performing Friday at 6:30pm. "Spooky Songs and Stories" at The Bee Tree Fire Station, 510 Bee Tree Rd., Swannanoa, NC. Sponsored by Friends of Swannanoa Library. Call 828-250-6486 for more information.

October 26: Ghostwalk Featuring the Backporch Storytellers. Join us on an evening stroll through North Charleston's Old Village featuring spooky tales for adults and children. Tours will start at The Meeting Place, 1077 East Montague Ave., North Charleston, SC. For more info contact N. Charleston Cultural Arts Dept. at 843-740-5854 or the Back porch Storytellers at 843-696-8016.

November 2013

November 9: Newton-Conover Auditorium presents An Evening with Storyteller Tim Lowry, 60 W. 6th Street, Newton, NC. Saturday at 7:30pm. Tickets are only \$10. Email olivia@newton-conoverauditorium.org or call 828-464-8100.

November 9: David Holt and Mipso in Concert, Charlotte, NC. An Evening with Mipso and David Holt. Neighborhood Theatre, 511 E 36th St., Charlotte, NC 28205. Time: TBD. <http://www.neighborhoodtheatre.com/>

November 15: Frost Is On The Punkin, with Storyteller, Tim Lowry. 3:00pm. Timrod Library, 217 Central Avenue, (downtown) Summerville, SC. Contact 843-871-4600.

November 24: Tellabration, presented by Asheville Storytelling Circle. 3-5pm. Folk Art Center, Milepost 382 Blue Ridge Parkway, Asheville, NC. Contact 828-298-7928 or [Click here](#) for a map to the Folk Art Center.

December 2013

December 2: The Ugly Sweater Tour featuring The Uncalled For Trio (Andy Offutt Irwin, Bil Lepp, Kim Weitkamp) 8:00pm.

(Continued on back page)



*Sylvia Payne, Editor
1621 Nathaniel Street
Newton, NC 28658*

(Calendar of Events continued from page 13)

December 2013

Greensboro Historical Museum, 130 Summit Ave.,
Greensboro, NC. Contact Beth
Sheffield, global.librarian@gmail.com

December 7: *Storytelling at Fletcher Feed & Seed.*

Storytellers supplied by Asheville Story Circle and STEAP, Inc.
3-5pm. 3715 Hendersonville Road (at intersection of Hwy 25
and Fanning Bridge Road), Fletcher, NC 28732. Site contact
828-216-3492; www.feedandseednc.org

December 20: *Dickens' Christmas Carol*, with Storyteller,
Tim Lowry. 3:00pm. Timrod Library, 217 Central Avenue,
(downtown) Summerville, SC. Contact 843-871-4600.

March 2014

March 14-15: *Charleston Tells Storytelling Festival* at
Wragg Square in downtown Charleston, SC. Note the date
change! More details soon. www.ccpl.org.

April 2014

April 10-12: *Storytelling Festival of Carolina*. Laurinburg,
NC. Contact 910-277-3599 or info@sfoc.info; <http://www.storytellingfestivalofcarolina.org>

Our condolences to Marva Moss upon the death of her mother, Maggie Esco, who passed away on July 3rd. She would have been 91 on July 29th.

NCSG Winter Workshop

January 24-26, 2014

Workshop Title: *Voice, Character and Making Your People Real*, led by master storyteller Andy Offutt Irwin. Overview: An experiential workshop, with lots of physical movement, for intermediate and advanced storytellers. To be held on the grounds of the Baptist Assembly at Fort Caswell, Oak Island, NC. More information with [Registration](#) - coming to you soon.