

THE 4TH OLD NORTH STATE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

BY CATHERINE MACKENZIE



Festival tellers: (L - R) Kanute Rarey, Larry Pearlman emcee, Becky Stone, Ray Christian, Johnny Fowler, Sherry Lovett, Brian McDowell, Noa Baum, Janice Curtis Greene, and Josh Goforth

Love and marriage, horse and carriage, music and story. All are perfect partners, as amply evidenced at the 4th Annual Old North State Storytelling Festival held at the Cary Theater in Cary, North Carolina, on November 4th and 5th, 2022.

This year's festival was bookmarked by performances by the talented musician-storytellers **Josh Goforth** and **Bryan McDowell**. In fact, this duo delighted audiences at all four showcases with their foot-stomping music and delightful repartee, with each session gave a fresh treat. Speaking of bookmarks... several performers brought their stories full circle by starting and ending their performance by singing lines from a song. Others incorporated songs within their stories. A large number of people in the audience had never before been to a storytelling festival. I overheard one woman say as much and add, "But I'll be sure to come again next year."

Emcee, Larry Pearlman, asked the audience what makes a good storyteller. It was agreed that a prime factor is a "good story." Audiences were treated to a plethora of good stories well told. Children and adults alike were engaged with story. To give you a taste of the weekend's magic, I'll introduce the performers in the order in which they appeared over the two days.

Together, **Josh Goforth** and **Bryan McDowell** played eight instruments over four sessions, but that is only a fraction of the instruments they played. Josh began his musical career at age four, playing the piano at church, but now he can play close to twenty instruments. We heard humorous stories about the mountain people of Sodom and Upper Paw Paw (total population 9), North Carolina, and the history behind much of the music shared. We also learned about the people who influenced the two men. The double fiddle case and fiddle

Continued next page

that Bryan used were gifted to him by his mentor, Orville Freeman, who even taught him to repair the instrument with a combination of toothpicks and superglue. The wealth of styles these men presented ranged from bluegrass, old-time ballads, swing, and classics from the likes of Bill Monroe and Doc Watson to the Beatles. It's impressive enough to watch one musician pick the fiddle with amazing speed, but seeing the two in tandem was phenomenal.

Noa Baum was raised in Jerusalem with aspirations of becoming an actress. We are lucky that instead, she found work telling stories to children. Her stories grab your heart and lift you to a place where you recognize the possibility of oneness; they are meant to be bridges to peace and understanding. She shared her book, *How the Birds Became Friends* and the story "It could always be worse" at the morning session to the delight of the children, who responded enthusiastically. When Noa moved to the United States after marriage, she had a job telling stories about the history of California. Obviously, this meant a lot of research in books, newspapers, and journals, as California's history is not a part of Israeli education. One of the results of this research was the colorful story she shared about the famous whip (stagecoach driver... remember horse and carriage), Charley Parkhurst. She wove this tale together with the story of women's fight for the right to vote in the United States. Noa also shared a story of love and marriage bookended by the song, "Fly Me to the Moon", relating the unlikely story of her courtship and marriage to her botanist husband, Stuart. She had us falling off our seats laughing as she read, complete with punctuation, from travel journals she and her husband kept on a trip to Rome and Yugoslavia in the 1980s.

Ray Christian told stories from his many experiences growing up in poverty in Richmond, Virginia, serving in combat with the U.S. army for twenty years, failing to finish Law School, and earning degrees in history and a Doctorate in Education Leadership. He intertwined humor and pathos. His stories touched the depths of our hearts. We sympathized with his boyhood friend, Moses, whose extreme hunger led him into crime. Although Ray's parents were illiterate, they believed in the power of books and instilled that thirst in their son. Ray's blue-collar Protestant ethics led him, at age seventeen, to join the army and ask the recruiter for the hardest job he had, assuming that would earn him the most money. A parachute jumper for the infantry was quite a step for someone who had nev-

er previously flown. Believing that saying something often enough made it come true, Ray told everyone he met that he was getting out of the army and going to law school. Although this didn't work out, and his journey didn't take him to combat injustice in the courtroom, he can combat ignorance in the classroom.

Janice Curtis Greene was named the official American Griot of the music and storytelling of West Africa for the state of Maryland by Governor Lawrence Hogan. Her telling about Turtle and the Sweet Potatoes and Br'er Rabbit had the children joining in. Janice tells stories to educate and inspire because, as she says, we can make a difference in the world. She started the powerful original story, "Remember", by asking us, "Do you want to hear a story," and having us answer, "Yes, I do." Whenever she mentioned the word, remember in the story, we were to call out the name of someone close to us who died. She would then offer the benediction, "Ahshay," meaning "And so it is, or Amen." The story of the loss of her two sons, one of whom never felt good enough for his father to stay, and the other broken in spirit and body in Iraq, spurred her to start a mentoring program for young people to realize that they don't need to depend on others to love them, they can change tragedy and pain for triumph and faith. Janice's telling of the story, "Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt", by Deborah Hopkinson, brought to life the tragedy and triumph of a young slave girl and the codes she sewed into a quilt to guide herself and others to freedom.

In **John Thomas Fowler's** energetic and theatrical telling of the original story, "As Old as a Bag of Dirt", he tells of his experience as an eight-year-old with a very strict third-grade teacher. We could all identify with the honor of being selected as the special student of the day and with having your name put up on the chalkboard if you didn't finish your homework. One spring afternoon, John told us, the weather was just too lovely to stay in and work, so he arrived at school unprepared, which would have been fine if the teacher didn't call on him. He tried to use his wits to answer the question, but his answer was far from the correct one and what he said next got him in deeper trouble.

Becky Stone's background in the theater was evident in her telling how, in 1916, the Swannanoa River rose up and flooded Biltmore Village in Asheville, North Carolina; the water rose twenty-two inches in twenty-four hours with dire consequences for the residents. Becky started by singing "Waterbound", the chorus of which is "Waterbound and I can't get home,

Continued next page
JTHT 2

down in North Carolina.” She included colorful details such as rocking chairs still rocking on houses floating down the river and kerosene lanterns still lighted on tables. The harrowing story of Kathleen Lipe Carter’s rescue while the rest of her party perished came alive through Becky’s facial expressions and gestures. We experienced Kathleen clinging to the limb of the tree, we saw the branch bending down to her and flinging her up from the water, and we saw her father washed away and missing the limb of a branch that could have saved him. The presentation ended with the second singing of “Waterbound”.

Sherry Lovett was given the story “Mr. Death and the Red-Headed Woman” by her friend and fellow storyteller, Gwenda Ledbetter, just when she needed it. Sherry framed the story with that of her mother, whose suffering from Alzheimer’s could be relieved somewhat by singing. So Sherry began by singing, “I Am A Poor Wayfaring Stranger”. The audience couldn’t resist humming along. Sherry told us that in an effort to save her true love, Billy-Be-Damned Bangtree, Maud Applegate accompanied Death two times around the world and came to realize that although some people fear death, others welcome him as an old friend...

a comforting thought for all of us. The set closed with Sherry singing the haunting melody once again.

Kanute Rarey claims that the stories he tells are entirely true except for the parts that aren’t. In his story about borrowing his brother’s shiny new Corvette to impress a girl in town, Kanute tells us of another kind of love... the love of a brother and the power of forgiveness. Kanute and his two brothers were raised by their spinster aunt, Arlene, and their grandparents. Aunt Arlene had five rules: just don’t do it, don’t get hurt, don’t get killed, don’t hurt anyone else, and when in doubt, just don’t do it. The boys had two rules: don’t get caught and don’t kill Aunt Arlene.

Love and marriage, horse and carriage music and story, teller and audience... it was a wonderful adventure. Mark your calendars now for next year’s festival on the first weekend of November. See you there.

Catherine is currently serving on the NCSG’s Board as Secretary/ Historian. She does such a great job she has been re-elected for the past several years. She is an avid collector of tales, fell in love with storytelling in the bayous of Louisiana, and is always thrilled to find a new story to share. She may be contacted at: mmackenzie50@gmail.com



Left photo - L to R John Thomas Fowler, Sherry Lovett, Noa Baum, Janice Curtis Green, Willa Brigham, Becky Stone, and Linda Gorham in lower right.

Right photo Ray Christian

**MORE PHOTOS:
PAGE 23**



NATIVE AMERICAN CODE TALKERS

from the editor’s desk

November is Native American Heritage Month. I’m celebrating this month by concentrating on the Code Talkers who created a radio code never cracked, during World War II.

It was 1942 when US Marines visited a Tuba City, Arizona, high school searching for volunteers. They desired young Native American men to volunteer for a secret mission. Chester Nez, was one of the first 29 Navajo volunteers to pass rigorous testing and train-

ing. They were the first recruits who skillfully created an incoherent code that helped win the war. The purpose of the code was to confuse the Japanese, since Navajo was an unwritten language.

Chester Nez joined in the 1st Marine Division. In early November 1942 his division was engaged in a brutal battle on Guadalcanal. Nez’s first Navajo Code radio transmission brought a strike directly on target

Continued next page

JOURNAL OF TAR HEEL TELLERS

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Vision Statement

To communicate the power, joy, and impact of story to every community in North Carolina.

Mission Statement

To create and nurture a thriving community of storytellers through performance and education.

Goals

- *To affirm the value of storytelling by fostering an appreciation of oral traditions and the importance of story listening.*
- *To educate people, both tellers and listeners, in North Carolina about storytelling.*
- *To promote excellence in oral tradition by developing emerging and established artists.*
- *To seek out the needs of North Carolina storytellers and respond by creating opportunities.*

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

Fall Cast of Characters

Sylvia Payne - Editor

Contributors: Linda Gorham, Brenda Kay Ledford, Joan Leotta, Tim Lowry, Lee Lyons, Catherine MacKenzie, Ray Mendenhall, Marva Moss, Larry Pearlman, Sam Pearsall, Mike Perry, Jim Payne, Connie Regan-Blake, Donna Marie Todd and Deborah Winkler.



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

Wallace Shealy and Catherine Yael Serota

told stories at the International Storytelling Center in Jonesborough TN in July. It was "Jonesborough Days" all weekend celebrating our country's birthday . . . **Lona Bartlett** recently told stories on the bettersaidthandone.com online storytelling show. Lona shared the stage with Norm Brecke, Alson Chung, Anne Rutherford, Ed Stivender and others . . . **Donna Marie Todd** recently returned from Hawaii after conducting a retreat there. She enjoyed touring before returning home. She says it was the trip of a lifetime! After catching up on jet lag, she was off to Natural Bridge Virginia to lead an *All Lutheran Women's Retreat*.

"The brain is a wonderful organ. It starts the moment you get up and doesn't stop until you get into the office." *Robert Frost*

CODE TALKERS *(continued)*

which demolished a Japanese machine gun nest. This white-knuckle experience gave Nez and his Code Talkers a feeling of accomplishment. The Marine commanders quickly gained confidence knowing the Navajo Code was an imperative weapon.

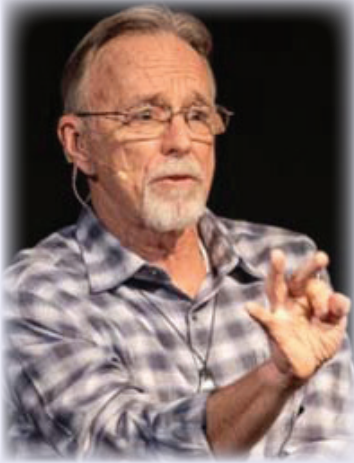
Sometime after the Marines established the total success of Nez and his Code Talkers group, hundreds of Native Americans were recruited. Other Native American Nations, in addition to Navajo, were trained as Code Talkers using their own native languages.

Nez found combat to be an arduous experience, as he later served in key Pacific battles on the front lines. He never became used to viewing dead bodies and acknowledged the importance of saying his Navajo prayers each day. At times he witnessed such vicious battles he almost lost his mind.

After returning to the US, he suffered many hardships including PTSD. He was also marginalized by the very country he fought hard to serve. Nez used his G.I. bill educational funds to major in fine arts at the University of Kansas. Following a number of odd jobs, Nez spent 25 years employed at a job he dearly loved. He became a muralist and painter at the Albuquerque Veteran of Affairs. At age 91, he finally received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Kansas University.

Chester Nez, and the 28 Navajo code creators were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by George W. Bush in 2001. Sadly, the Gold Medal came posthumously, for most of these men. During a news interview in 2005, Chester Nez stated, "When joining the Marine Corps, I thought about how my people were mistreated. But then I thought this would be my chance to do something for my country." In 2014 he died at age 94, the last surviving member of the original Navajo Code Talkers.

FROM THE PRESIDENT - Steve Tate



Lovers of Storytelling, I am privileged to serve as the current President of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild in its TWENTY-FIFTH year! The history of our family of storytellers is quite a story in itself. So, let's celebrate all that has happened!

Your Guild Board of Directors has begun work on our priorities for 2022-2023.

For obvious reasons, the recent pandemic significantly impacted live storytelling everywhere. We all wondered how storytelling would survive without our live audiences of Delighted Listeners for a while! All across the globe, thousands of live storytelling events were canceled. These cancellations included our premier Guild events, workshops, and retreats. But then we discovered ZOOM and other online platforms. At first, most of us resisted thinking, "We can't tell stories to a screen!" Then like the creative, adaptable, and determined kind of folks we are, we DID tell and listened to stories on many screens for almost two years. And we discovered some benefits to this forced change. Now we can be connected with storytellers all over the USA and even other countries. Multiple opportunities currently exist to experience the creative diversities of storytelling anywhere in the world without the expense of time and travel.

With these changes and new opportunities in mind, here is how your Guild leaders see our current situation.

- The core activities of the Guild remain valuable ways for us to continue to fulfill our mission:
 - Continue our services to 100+ members
 - Up-to-date Storyteller Member Directory
 - Winter Workshop (January at Fort Caswell)
 - Spring Retreat (April at Wildacres)

- Fall OLD NORTH STATE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL (Nov. at The Cary Theater)
- The Journal of Tar Heel Tellers
- Regional Representatives initiatives
- Scholarships and Grants
- We need more effective PROMOTION of these Guild activities and resources
 - Revamped or new website
 - Effective, planned social media outreach
 - More frequent e-newsletters
 - Wider circulation of The Journal of Tar Heel Tellers
 - Effective outreach to find storytellers who can benefit from our scholarships and grants
- There are other challenges too:
 - Our membership is aging. We need to recruit young members.
 - We do not have enough diversity. We need to reach out to storytellers from other cultures and perspectives.
 - Our Guild leaders are often overworked. We need to recruit new Board members bringing new ideas and energy who can share the work.
 - We need to continue to poll our members for their ideas about what the Guild can do for them.

I believe storytelling is alive and well in North Carolina. In-person events have returned in many places across the state. PLUS, multiple events, performances, and workshops are now available online. Our Guild does not need to duplicate what others are offering. But we need to do a better job promoting the activities and resources we provide to NC storytellers. I also hope we can connect more directly with the successful "HUBS" of storytelling across the state. These include groups like Roadhouse Storytellers with Sam Pearsall, Stories on the Square with Kanute Rarey, Bynum Front Porch Storytelling with Cindy Raxter, Asheville Storytelling Circle, and many other such groups promoting storytelling in their regions.

Continued next page

I am pleased to announce that Sam Pearsall has been elected as our President-Elect and will serve as President of the Guild next year. You can read all about Sam here: <https://samstories.org>

Finally, be sure and join us for Winter Workshop at Fort Caswell on Jan. 20 - 22. (see page 23)

TAMING THE WILD PERSONAL NARRATIVE - with Donna Washington

Lots of us tell personal narratives. How do you decide which ones to tell? How do you end them? Why do some of them work so well and others fall flat? How do you pair them with folklore? How long should they be? In this workshop, we will be talking about and working on the wild personal narrative. We will find them,

capture them, and make them dance for us! So, bring a tale to share, finished or unfinished.

You can get all the info and register here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/taming-the-wild-personal-narrative-workshop-with-donna-washington-registration-407089384307>

I am grateful for all the dedicated work of Guild members over the past 25 years. The Guild has been a place of learning, inspiration, and community for me. I hope you feel the same way and will join me to continue and expand this good work during the year ahead.

Steve Tate

FOREVER BY JIM PAYNE

The cabbie dropped her off at the edge of the park. He wouldn't go there after dark, certainly not this close to midnight. She liked Central Park after dark, its stillness, quietness. The early April air was not quite warm, not quite cold. She thought it brisk. Entering from Central Park West at West 72nd Street, she arrived at Strawberry Fields with 15 minutes to spare.

Morgana, Streeter, and Harlo preferred to meet on the north side of The Lake at the Shakespeare Garden. She loved the Beatles' music and especially John, so was partial to Strawberry Fields. Her mother had started the meetings in the Park, she said to "gather our forces in nature, away from the howls and screams of the city."

At midnight, Streeter and Harlo winked in, not the least bit disheveled from their journey. Morgana, never on time, winked in three minutes late. She called the meeting to order, quickly dispensed with Morgana's complaint about the weather, her never ending demand for a transfer to Miami. She addressed her small coven, "as you know our numbers are decreasing, our influence in New England is nil."

"Without increased numbers, of strong reliable members, we'll vanish. I doubt that we will even be



missed. 2024 is the hundredth year of our coven, if our numbers do not increase to at least 10, we will cease to exist." That was written.

Leaving the Park following the meeting, she felt gloomy, uneasy. One year to straighten things out, to get reorganized, wield some influence once again within the Guardian Angels. Probably means going back to magic school. She didn't want to even consider that. Exiting the Park, she thought she saw Morgana jaywalk in front of a bus. Heard a faint 'tink' and Morgana was gone. The bus never slowed, continued on Central Park West until it was out of sight. "Well, she won't complain about the weather here anymore," she said to herself.

Jim Payne is a poet and short story writer. He has spent time in Manhattan near Central Park. Certainly not at midnight... Jim currently serves on the NCSG board. He may be contacted at: jpaynehorizon@gmail.com



ROADHOUSE STORYTELLERS® REVIVAL - SOLD OUT!

by Sam Pearsall

“Hi! I’m Sam Pearsall, and I tell stories. Welcome to Roadhouse Storytellers!”

That’s how I introduced myself on Wednesday, March 30, 2017, when four members of a small story circle in Raleigh and I decided to call ourselves the “Roadhouse Storytellers.” Our goal was to put on a storytelling concert at the Pittsboro Roadhouse in Pittsboro, NC. The restaurant had an event space, but they had never included storytellers. Clearly this was an experiment to see what would happen.

Management agreed to let Roadhouse Storytellers use their event space hoping to sell some extra dinners that night. “We’re looking for cheeks in seats,” they said. That night, the Roadhouse sold about 35 extra dinners and was pleased with the results. We agreed then that there could be a Roadhouse Storytellers event six Wednesday nights a year. Wednesdays were the only nights they could be sure nothing else was going on, and they were the nights when they most needed extra customers.

Over the next three years, Roadhouse Storytellers produced shows with multiple tellers at the Pittsboro Roadhouse. We also had special one-man shows featuring Alan Hoal, Cindy Raxter, Andy Offutt Irwin, and myself. All told, fifty-five different storytellers from five states told from that stage. Our attendance ranged from over 100 down to 30. We were honored when those 30 hearty listeners joined us on a bitterly cold and stormy night in January 2020. And that show was lauded by those in attendance as one of our best, warmest, most intimate shows. One teller couldn’t make it, and the other four, like all storytellers everywhere, were glad to have the extra time to tell. They rocked the house.

The goal of Roadhouse Storytellers, beginning with our second show, was to build a storytelling and story-listening community of people who came to the events, not only to enjoy the stories on stage but to make friends and to share their own stories while

Performances at the Page
Roadhouse Storytellers
 featuring Sam Pearsall, Linda G..., Willa Brigham, Alan Hoal

SOLD OUT!

An Entertaining Night Out for Adults
 with stories, hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and desserts

Friday, September 9
 7 p.m.

Page-Walker Arts & History Center

\$20/person
 Tickets at The Cary Theater box office and through eTix

Page-Walker Arts & History Center
 119 Ambassador Loop in Downtown Cary
www.townofcary.org/performancesthepage
 (919) 460-4963

breaking bread together. This goal was announced from the stage at every Roadhouse Storytellers performance, and I believe it was adopted by all of those in regular attendance. At any rate, that’s what happened.

Then, on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 the Roadhouse Storytellers event at the Roadhouse was cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Shortly after that, the Pittsboro Roadhouse lost its lease, and Roadhouse Storytellers had no home. Beginning in 2021, when the Covid scare had subsided, I began looking for a new venue for Roadhouse Storytellers. For months I had no success. Then, in the lobby of the Cary Theater, just after the grand finale of the Third Annual Old North State Storytellers Festival, I was discussing this

Continued next page

dilemma with the manager of the Page-Walker Arts and History Center. Center staff had been powerful supporters of the Old North State Festival from the very beginning and instrumental in securing support for that festival from the Town of Cary. Now they suggested that maybe Roadhouse Storytellers should try putting on a show at the Page-Walker Center. We settled on Friday evening, September 9, 2022, two and a half years after we were suspended by Covid and our lost venue. The Town would provide snacks and drinks. I would recruit the tellers.

I invited star storytellers Willa Brigham, Linda Gorham, and Alan Hoal to join me on stage to revive Roadhouse Storytellers. We all worked our mailing lists and social media. The Town of Cary promoted the event in their community publications. It all worked. The event sold out more than a week in advance. As the audience filtered in to their seats, they renewed many of their old acquaintances from the early days of Roadhouse Storytellers. The atmosphere was warm, convivial, and intimate. Conversations were animated and bright. The Town's snacks and drinks were perfect for table talk. And then at 7 pm, for the first time in two and a half years, I walked on stage and called out to the audience, "Hi, I'm Sam Pearsall, and I tell stories. Welcome to the NEW Roadhouse Storytellers."

And then Willa opened the show with a bang and a wooden hat. Alan brought back his boyhood at the

horror movies. Linda had them singing Beatles songs. And I told them about sinking my mom's car in Old Hickory Lake. The audience was thrilled with the whole show and bombarded the Center staff with questions about whether we would do it again. Our response? "Of course, we will do it again!"

I hope you'll join us on Saturday, December 10 from 7-9 pm at the Bynum Front Porch, in Bynum, NC. Our lineup includes: "Miss Alice" Cunningham, Rebekah O'Connell, Steve Tate, Greg Whitt, and yours truly Sam Pearsall. Interested? Send me an email and I'll put you on our mailing list.

Sam Pearsall is a professional storyteller whose practice is to tell tall tales and true tales based on his own experiences. In early 2017, he founded and for three years produced Roadhouse Storytellers® at the renowned Pittsboro, NC Roadhouse until Covid 19 changed the world. He may be contacted at:

Sam@SamStories.org;
<https://SamStories.org> or
<https://SamStories.org/roadhouse-storytellers/>



What's Happening with Our Storytellers!

AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES STORYTELLING PROJECT

The [Asheville Art Museum](#) and Buncombe County Public Libraries presented a series of storytelling programs in August and September to highlight the Art Museum's current American Perspectives exhibit. Six NCSG and Asheville Storytelling Circle members participated in the American Perspectives storytelling series: Chuck Fink, Larry Pearlman, Catherine Yael Serota Shealy and Becky Stone, Michael Reno Harrell and Connie Regan-Blake.



ROADHOUSE PROGRAM by Larry Pearlman

My girlfriend Marti and I just drove to Cary to attend the Roadhouse Storytellers show put together by Sam Pearsall. It was worth the trip!! Sam, Alan, Willa and Linda were ON FIRE! Every one of their presentations was Jonesborough-worthy. I was so tickled that they were presenting to a sold-out house and these folks did not sit on their hands. Applause and laughter filled the room as our four tellers spun their magic. My congratulations and appreciation to Sam for putting together such a wonderful program. The next Roadhouse program, in Bynum on December 10, features Alice Cunningham, Greg Whitt, Rebekah O'Connell and Steve Tate in addition to Sam. You might give some thought to taking a mini-road trip to take it in.

Finding Ideas for Storytelling

by Brenda Kay Ledford



Where do you find ideas to tell stories? Just look around. Learn to observe your surroundings. Whenever you least expect it, an idea may land at your feet.

I got a story for an anthology recently at the laundry mat. Two little girls were racing about the laundry mat, pushing each other in carts. They were twins and asked my name. The blonde-headed, blue-eyed girls told me they were going to kindergarten this year and Bunny was their pet rabbit. The elderly grandmother limped to the washing machine and shared their story with me. She was rearing the children since their parents were killed in a car wreck.

Old Mountain Press called for submissions for Christmas stories. I pieced together the laundry mat setting with the little girls as the main characters. I added scenes with the disabled grandmother caring for the kids. With some imagination I wove a story about Christmas for the anthology.

Who doesn't dislike waiting in line at the grocery store, the doctor's office, or bringing trash to the landfill? Take advantage of the opportunity to observe people. Listen to the conversations of people in line. Most people chat on their cellphones in public. What are they saying? Do they have a dialect?

You never know when an idea will just land at your feet. Learn to observe your surroundings. Notice people, be sensitive to their needs. Strike up a conversation if it's appropriate, and you may just weave a story from this experience.

With a little of imagination, you may be able to weave a story from these strangers talking on their smartphones. I've gotten ideas from folks while waiting in line. It's amazing what you can learn by observing people. How are they dressed? Do they have unusual mannerisms? What are their facial expressions?

Brenda Kay is a retired educator, published writer, author, blogger, and an award-winning poet/writer. She may be contacted at: ledfordbrenda@hotmail.com

"Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes." Mahatma Gandhi

Careful What You Say! by Deborah Winkler

Whatever the weather, we were out of doors year-round. But on this particular day, we created a baseball diamond in the living room using wash clothes. We were going to play ball with a toy plastic bat and ball. Space was limited but Derek and Robin were small bodied at the time. Our son Derek was three years older than our daughter Robin.

I was the pitcher. Derek was the first batter up as he had had some exposure to playing this game. He made a first base hit! When Robin stepped up, Derek

helped her to understand where to stand as well as how to hold the bat. Once he was back on first base, I yelled, "Hit him home, Robin!" While I blinked, Robin ran after Derek with the bat held high. Derek ran for cover. Realizing my mistake, I ran to catch Robin on the fly. Luckily, no one got hurt. We took a timeout to explain the phrase 'hit him home'.

Deborah Winkler has served as the Southern Piedmont Area Rep. since July of 2017. She organizes frequent ZOOM gatherings with various topics. You may contact her at: winklerdeborah@yahoo.com



The Bully and My Baby Sister by Donna Marie Todd

When I was 3, my sister came. I knew Mother had gained some weight but I didn't know all that extra padding would soon be called a baby sister.

She sure could scream, I'll give her that much. Naptime, supertime, just about any time, she'd take to screaming. She'd scream and scream and you know, nothing ruins an event like a screaming child. My sister was tiny, with a wrinkled face and hands, and she looked oddly old.

I had rather gotten used to being the center of attention, and not just at home, but at church, too. I was the first baby in the pastor's parsonage in over 20 years. I was used to being handed from one lap to the next like a precious jewel.

Then my sister came along, and suddenly all the loving arms belonged to her. Literally overnight it seemed, I was transformed from some kind of Christian princess into something called, "The Big Sister." With this new, unrequested title came responsibilities: Like telling my caretakers if she needed a new diaper or had dropped her bottle.

I went from princess to page.

I had to carry her big bag of personal effects from the house to the car and to all the other places we went and back. My duties also included making sure she didn't fall off the couch or roll out of the grocery cart when she got big enough to sit up.

I tried to drown her twice.

Well, technically, three times, but I only got caught twice. It was their fault. They should never have left her in the bathtub with me.

We were, and still are, very different people.

She loved a bubble bath, I don't. I loved homemade mashed potatoes—she liked the instant ones. I liked mac and cheese, she liked grilled cheese. Long story short, once she was old enough to eat real food, we

had instant potatoes and grilled cheese a lot.

She was the "baby" and we did what the baby wanted.

"Don't you want to your sister to be happy?" Daddy would ask?

"Yes, of course!" I replied. And I meant it.

Everyone said heaven was a beautiful place, filled with never-ending happiness. I just wanted to get her up there sooner rather than later, while I could still enjoy a nap or two.

Before she was even two, she started bumping into things.

Her eyes were crossed. I don't mean a little crossed, I mean a lot crossed. I mean crossed as in she needed surgery to see straight again. So they cut the muscles in her eyes and reattached them.

But then her eyes got lazy.

Which is technically called Amblyopia. They treat amblyopia by making you wear patches on one eye like a pirate, or glasses with a frosted lens on one side. A preacher's kid is not allowed to look like a pirate, so she got the frosted glasses instead of an eye patch and a pet parrot.

The ophthalmologist alternated her frosted lenses every few months.

Now, by this time, we were both in elementary school.

My days as a princess were long over but my big sister duties were picking up.

You know how bullies are. My skinny sister in her frosted glasses became the target for a bully in our school named Bobby.

Now in those days, kids like us in West Virginia walked to and from school.

Six miles each way, barefoot, uphill, in the snow. And Bobby started following us.

As we walked home, he would torment my sister.

He'd called her "old cross-eyes," "one-eyed Betsy," and stuff like that for months. I told him to stop, but that just made it worse.

Continued next page

He'd wave his hands on the side with the frosted lens and scare her.

He'd run up next to her and yell "Boo!" because she couldn't see him coming.

I warned him to stop.

But he'd just say, "Oh yeah? Who's gonna make me?" And I'd say, "I am. You'd better watch it, Bobby, I'm warning you." And he'd pretend to shake and say, "Oh, that's right, she's got a big sister. Oooo, I'm so scared. Oooo."



One day, it was raining as we were walking home. My friend and I were talking about the new Nancy Drew book we were hoping to get for our birthdays! Bobby started shoving my sister. When I told him to stop it, he got up in my face and laughed at me.

And then, he pushed my sister, face first, into a big mud puddle and stood over her laughing.

What happened next was not my fault.

Something came over me. Something very big and powerful; angry and dark. I grabbed that boy from behind and shoved his face right through a telephone pole.

Well, his face didn't actually go all the way through.

But he did crumple to the ground crying, and blood was everywhere.

He deserved it.

I helped my sister up, took her hand, and walked her home because that's what big sisters do.

The next day, I was called to the principal's office.

I figured I was going to get another reading or writing ribbon!

But instead, Bobby was there, sitting in a chair, with white tape on his face and wads of cotton crammed up his nose.

I had to sit down next to him.

My heart was beating so loud I'm sure everyone could hear it.

The principal asked Bobby to tell him what had happened on the way home.

And, with a nasal, muffled voice he said, "Donna Marie pushed my face into a telephone pole after her sister fell into a mud puddle."

After my sister fell into a mud puddle?!

That made me so mad I almost did it again. I was all geared up to tell my side of it.

But the principal didn't ask me what happened. And what happened next could never happen today.

The principal just looked at Bobby and laughed.

And then he said, "Are you trying to tell me A GIRL did this to you? Is that what you're trying to tell me young man?" And as he kept laughing, Bobby shook his head "No."

And that was that.

I was free to go and Bobby never bullied my sister again. Ever.

If I couldn't be a princess anymore, I sure wasn't going to let some dumb, mean redneck who couldn't spell push my sister into a mud puddle in the rain.

See, when you get a baby sister, they hand you a pair of Big Girl Pants, and your life is never the same.

(To get the next episode of Big Girl Pants, sign up for free at donnamarietodd.com!)

Donna Marie is a professional storyteller, TEDx speaker, recording artist, singer, writer, teaching artist and retreat leader. As a multi-faceted artist she delivers perfectly-crafted performances.

HEALTHLINE TIPS: BRAIN EXERCISES

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/brain-exercises>

The brain is involved in everything we do and, like any other part of the body, it needs to be cared for too.

Exercising the brain to improve memory, focus, or daily functionality is a top priority for many people, especially as they get older. That said, people of all ages can benefit from incorporating a few simple brain exercises into their daily life, which are explored in more detail in this article.

Focusing on your brain health is one of the best things you can do to improve your concentration, focus, memory, and mental agility, no matter what age you are.

By incorporating brain exercises into your everyday life, you'll get to challenge your mind, sharpen your cognitive skills, and possibly learn something new and enriching along the way, too.

WHAT'D I MISS? by Linda Gorham

In the first song of Act II of the musical Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson returns to the United States (after being in France during the American Revolution) and innocently sings, "What did I miss?" The response ... "Ummmm.... A War!!!!"

So, I ask you ... What may you have missed from the NCSG Spring 2022 Journal? There was lots of good stuff inside. Wanna test your memory?

- 1) The National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, October 7-9 celebrated a milestone. How many years?
- 2) Tim Lowery has a new show about a man who said, "Show me a thoroughly satisfied man, and I will show you a failure." Who is he?
- 3) "The Earth We Share" is an international science and technology camp that encourages middle school and secondary school students to consider the impact STEM subjects have on society while building their skills in science, mathematics and technology. Who started this program?



- 4) Storytelling Alberta is celebrating its 40th Anniversary. Each week new stories from 40 storytellers from throughout Canada are added to its YouTube channel. One program is called "Around the World in 40 Tales. The other is called _____.
- 5) What were the dates of the 2022 Old North Storytelling Festival in Cary?
- 6) What former NCSG member and author of over 25 folklore books has been called the "Custodian of the Twilight Zone" by Southern Living magazine? Hint: She had a ghostly encounter with Sylvia Payne.
- 7) Malapropism is a technique for adding humor to stories. What does this word mean?

We hope you will 'dissolve' the mystery of these tidbits of information from the Spring 2022 issue.

Linda Gorham
(Answers on page 24)

A Penny Saved is a Penny Earned by Willa Brigham



Mama Louise knew her daughter would be graduating in a year and high school class rings would be ordered. The same thing happened just two years earlier with her older son. The small weekly paycheck was stretched across town with only pennies to spare.

As a single mother taking care of a home and three children, you had to be wise with your funds. Those pennies were put in a jar in

anticipation of graduation and the class ring. She truly believed you could accomplish a task, one step at a time. In her case, one penny at a time. Months passed and the pennies continued to add up. A year later when the senior class announced it was time to order those rings, Mama had the money. She had saved one penny at a time. Fifty years later, her daughter still has that ring.

Willa is sharing this story from her new book. She is hoping the book will be published in the spring 2023.

Willa Brigham is an inspirational storyteller, speaker, performing artist, writer and two-time Emmy Award Winner. She is also known as the Midnight Quilter. Willa has a passion for bringing laughter to audiences of all ages.
www.willabrigham.com

Poetry as Storytelling by Ray W. Mendenhall

Recently I did a year-long workshop on poetry which reacquainted me with my “poetic” side. So, I have been experimenting a bit with poetry as storytelling. One way is by taking stories or elements of a story and translating it into poetry. Here is a poem about the Whisper Wheel roller rink featured in some of my “Fork” stories.

Nostalgia

Ray W. Mendenhall, March, 2021

The Whisper Wheel roller rink

‘Twas an old converted ‘bacco barn.
That never had a name.

They didn’t change the floorboards
And the wood wasp loved to bore,
So when the skaters start around
Sounds just like some small war.

In afternoons, the teens would come
To share the latest news,

Who was going out with whom
And who broke up with whose.

It’s how it is in smaller towns
With little else to do.

You take a thing that’s old and done
and make it something new.

Another way is to draw a poetic picture of some topic or subject. Here’s a bit of cowboy poetry, a story in a poem.

The Cowboy Way

Way out west where the cowboys run
Ropin’and Brandin’ in the sun
Where prairie dogs pop up and peer
And wranglers herd the errant steer
Days are long ‘til the work is done
From light of day to settin’ sun

Chasing’ steers
and herdin’
strays

The essence of a
cowboy’s days.
Gathered around
the fire at night
They reminisce
there in the light

Memories of their cowboy past
Settles them to sleep at last.

Until old cook announces day
To send them on their cowboy way.

Here’s another kind of approach, a poem reflecting on a momentary experience.

On Minding Children Crossing

Slow children crossing...

That’s what the signs says.

How slow

No one knows,

But keep you’re eyes peeled.

Keep all you senses on alert

To be sure no one gets hurt.

It’s important, be aware;

Be sure to practice every care.

It is a thought, a kind of prayer

As I sit here in this chair.

It is a different approach. It takes a very different slant.
A different way of “telling” the story.

Ray has written, spoken and led workshops on storytelling for children, youth and adults. Storytelling and the Storytelling tradition is close to his heart. He has been heard to say, on more than one occasion, “coming to storytelling for me was like coming home. It is a place where I truly live.” You may contact him at:

rwmend@gmail.com



DID YOU KNOW . . .

The State Library of North Carolina subscribes to online databases, many of which are available outside the library with your library card.

Yes... all you need is to have a card from your local library in NC. If you live in a state outside of NC, your state is likely to have similar materials in your

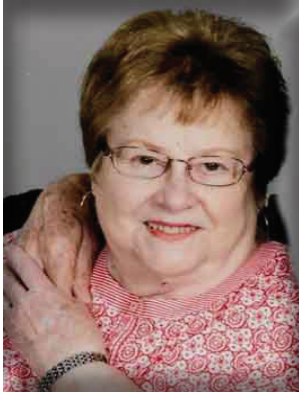
State Library. It’s amazing what you may discover through these great resources for free!

<https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/research>

<https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/research/genealogy-and-family-history>

TRIBUTE to MIMI COLE

January 3, 1936-June 23, 2022



We are saddened that our long-time member and friend Mimi Cole passed away on June 23. Mimi and her husband Marvin were charter members of the Asheville Storytelling Circle and the North Storytelling Guild. Many of us remember their years of telling, both in

the Circle, the Guild, in the community and beyond.

Many of us who attended that first Guild Meeting during a weekend in March 1998 will remember Marvin & Mimi. They were a vital part of this gathering. Included in this article you will see a photo of Mimi sharing stories with parents and children some years ago at a Guild storytelling festival.

Mimi was known for her love of traditional folktales and children's story, while Marvin is known for his Mark Twain stories. As Sandra Gudger said, "I know that Mimi loved telling the stories, because there was a special sparkle in her eyes and smile on her face when she told her tales." Sandra also remembers all the home-canned goods Mimi put up each year.



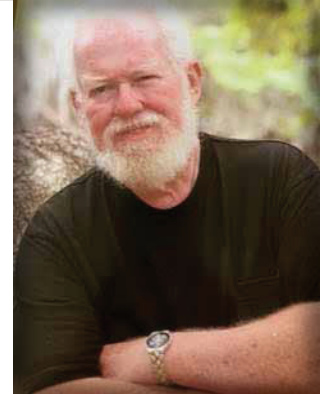
For many years Mimi and Marvin hosted the annual ASC holiday party in their lovely and spacious home in Candler, NC. She will be deeply missed by her long-time Asheville Storytelling friends who saw her often!



Our Sympathy is also extended to Doyle Pace on the death of his wife, Ann.

TRIBUTE to JIM GREGORY

Born May 31, 1940 – Died July 31, 2022



Jim Gregory was born in California and developed polio at the early age of 16 months. His grandfather pulled all the strings he could to get an iron lung. Jim lived in this contraption for six months. He then moved on to wear braces on his legs. At the end of third grade he was finally able to walk without them and continued on to lead a rich, multifaceted life.

He was involved in the equal rights movement of the 60's and went on the Selma-Montgomery March. He became a preacher in West Virginia for a short time and then a Social Studies teacher in Florida. He owned a ranch where he trained quarter horses and helped students learn to ride. He was a biker, riding over a million miles across the nation. He loved to sing and play guitar; he was a great storyteller and won a *Storytelling World Award* for the recording of "The Hanging of Tom Brown" where he recounted his experiences during the Civil Rights movement.

Unfortunately, many of our Guild storytellers didn't get the opportunity to know Jim, other than those living in the Mountains of NC. He was a member of NCSG and the Asheville Storytelling Circle. As many active Asheville Storytelling Circle storytellers lived nearby, Jim established a number of likeminded friends. He and his countless stories will be greatly missed.

RESOURCES

Are you searching for books on storytelling? Try August House publishing.

<https://www.augusthouse.com/>

Search Topics:

Books – Provides a number of ways to conduct a book search.

Learning Resources – includes lesson plans, character traits, common core standards and much more.

Folktales – Especially helpful if you are working with students.

Authors – You may find some familiar authors.

News – Press Releases, Social Media, Blogs, Newsletters.

Do You Believe in Ghosts? by Tim Lowry



People often ask me, “Do you believe in ghosts?” Yes, I do. Here are two stories that explain why I believe.

Once, a number of years ago, on Thanksgiving Day, after we had consumed a fabulous feast followed by the traditional nap, my family and I enjoyed putting up the Christmas tree in our living room. The following day, on Black Friday— the traditional day for so much merchandizing and profiteering that the sheer volume of sales would cause Jacob Marley to suffer an apoplectic, yet ecstatic, seizure— I ascended the stairs from the living room to my office above and pulled down from the shelf my well-worn rehearsal copy of “The Carol.” It was a bright and sunny day without a storm cloud in the sky and very warm, which is typical weather that time of year for my aptly named hometown of Summerville, SC. All of the windows in the house were shut and the air-conditioner was running. Just as I plunked the heavy volume down upon the reading desk and flopped back the bright red covers, a great gust of wind from who knows where came tearing around the house. It whirled and whistled

beneath the eaves of the roof just outside my office window. I felt my clothing ripple and the pages of the newly opened book fluttered as the wind came sweeping through the room. The window was closed, I tell you! And then, from downstairs I heard a crash and my wife’s voice almost in the same instant. “Did you feel that?!” she yelled from the back of the house. We met in the living room to discover that the Christmas tree had tumbled over onto the floor. I started working on getting the tree upright again and my wife fetched the broom to sweep up the inevitably broken ornaments and decorations that we were certain to discover. However, to our surprise— perhaps I should say amazement— nothing was broken except for one big, black ball that had “Bah, Humbug!” written in white lettering across its surface. Needless to say, Charles Dickens, who claims in the narration of the story that lay open upon my desk to be “standing in the spirit” at my elbow, had my full attention!

When I go on tour with Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* I am always comforted to know that the Ghost of Christmas Present is traveling beside me. He shows up every year without fail. With the sprinklings of his torch The Ghost of Christmas Present smooths my way, makes everyone jolly and merry, and causes everything to be more exciting and festive than usual. Once upon a time, I was particularly aware of his giant presence in the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. I was traveling with two carry-on items. One was a bright orange roll aboard suitcase that held a few CD recordings, some

business cards, my personal copy of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, and my costume consisting of wool trousers, a balloon sleeved shirt with stand up collar, brocade vest, and a large silk neckerchief. The other item was a ridiculously large, dark brown top hat that is the “crowning accessory” for my Dickens costume. The hat would not fit into the bright orange suitcase without being crushed, so I was wearing it. As I strolled through the airport, people smiled, waved, wished me “Merry Christmas” and one man even exclaimed “There goes Charles Dickens!” I was inclined to believe that all this good will was merely the result of my festive top hat. Then I came to the sixty-foot escalator that would carry me, my top hat, the bright orange suitcase, AND the unseen Ghost of Christmas Present down to the train station in the basement level of the airport. As I stepped onto the moving stairway, I thought to myself, “Some busy traveler in a rush to catch their next flight will want to hurry down this escalator. I’ll move my suitcase to rest in front of myself, so as to keep the left side clear for people wishing to walk down the stairs.” (This is a common courtesy when moving through the Atlanta airport. In fact, you’ll often hear people in a hurry call out from the top of the escalator “I have a tight connection. Passing on the left!” as they hurry down the stairs.)

Just as I started to move my suitcase, I lost my grip on the handle. Before I had time to react the suitcase started to slide down the escalator. Being made of hard, slick plastic the thing picked up speed at

Continued next page

an alarming rate and shot down that incline like a Russian bobsled chasing a bottle of vodka! I only had time to yell, "Passing on the left!" Right on cue, everyone on the moving stairs stepped to their right and turned to see my suitcase hurtling past. Miraculously, it did not fly off course but went zooming by at least twenty people with alarming velocity. When it hit the hard, marble tile floor at the bottom it slid across the subway station like a giant hockey puck and disappeared from sight. I could not see where the suitcase had ended up, but I knew it had finally stopped when I heard a loud slam against the unseen, opposite wall of the train station lobby. My first panicked thought was, "I've killed somebody!" I could see myself sitting in a funeral parlor explaining over and over again to mourners filing past the coffin how my suitcase had killed some poor, unsuspecting stranger.

As I ran down the escalator with my top hat in my hand, I made hurried inquiries about the welfare of everyone my suitcase had passed. No one reported an injury. The whole affair was so sudden, I think they were

in complete shock and not exactly sure what had just happened. When I got to the bottom, I looked across the tile floor to see a tall, handsome airline employee in a bright red sport coat staring down at my suitcase which was resting against the far wall. There was not another soul in the train station. I ran toward my suitcase and the airline employee smiled, reached out his hand, and said, "Dude! That was the coolest thing I've ever seen!" We fist bumped, I picked up my luggage which was not damaged, and stepped onto the train. The train doors closed and that was that. (Except for the gold sprinklings of the Spirit's torch that I distinctly saw swirling through the atmosphere of the train station ensuring that everyone involved in this little holiday escapade lived happily ever after!)

Storyteller and artist, Tim Lowry is well known for his one-man show, Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Over the years, his show has been a favorite holiday performance at the International Storytelling Center, Jonesborough, TN. Tim will be presenting this show again in Jonesborough this December. If you can't attend in person, you may purchase a ticket to watch it online! You may contact Tim at: timlowry@bellsouth.net

"We become by reaching." - Robert Fulghum

If You've Got a Life, You've Got a Story by Larry Pearlman

I LOVE the Asheville Storytelling Circle tagline! It's something I've always believed, even before I knew there was a storytelling community. You may notice that almost all of my stories come from my life and very few of them have exaggeration or embellishment. As has been said, "life is stranger than fiction", so why make anything up?

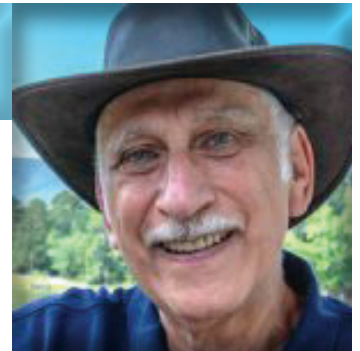
For years I had said that if you had 30 people in a room and randomly picked out 10, you could write a book about their stories. Then I did it. I wrote a book, "Journey to Bliss - Stories to Inspire You to Find and Follow Your Passion", that told the stories of 13 normal people who were living their passion in some way and had an interesting story of how they got there. In fact, some of the stories are rather incredible, yet all true.

I'm guessing that most storytellers, like me, not only like to TELL stories, but also really enjoy listening to a good story. For me, I do enjoy hearing the folktales and other fictional stories that many tellers tell or even outright lies such as Bil Lepp specializes in but my favorite stories are the stories of people's lives. I love

asking couples to tell me the story of how they met. If you have done this, then you know how much fun it is to watch them correcting each other on details as they go through the story. I also like asking people how they got into their chosen profession and recently have discovered how many interesting stories come from the question, "Why did you move to Black Mountain?"

Instead of going to a movie or playing a game, next time I get together with one of you, or more, let's just tell each other stories from our lives. Great way to get to know each other better and there is no better entertainment.

Larry has had a successful 30-year career in sales, sales training, public speaking and acting Minister for Emissary Ministry. He has traveled with the Peace Corp and lived in Africa, Costa Rica and Australia. Not long ago he found a home in Black Mountain, NC. You may contact him at: larrypearlman42@gmail.com





FOLDED FOOTNOTES: BY MIKE PERRY



OH GREAT! I'M WRONG AGAIN

me. I was not drawn to a story about a girl who morphs into a swan, or an Inuit tale containing strange names and an evil villain, but my grandkids asked me to read to them.

It was bedtime and Alex and Maggie had school the next day. I hatched a plan. Knowing that they would try to keep me reading to ward off the sandman's arrival, I was sure that they would not enjoy dated folktales from long ago, stories from foreign cultures. Perfect, I thought, they'll be bored, I knew these folktales would not engage the imaginations of my 5-year-old granddaughter and her 7-year-old brother.

Usually I tell them my favorite stories. Stories that flow. The ones I love and the kids do too, tales that draw a line from my heart to theirs. I know exactly the impact they will have. These are the golden few. I am convinced that I possess 'superior taste,' a gift that allows me to recognize a great story. I like to think that a great story is instantly recognizable. Again and again I find how wrong I am..

Great stories, like unknown friends, surround you sitting silently. As a teller I must remain vigilant, open to saying hello. "Hello friend. It's nice to meet you. Who are you?" It is challenging to search for them, reminding myself that they can hide anywhere. Keeping a sharp edge requires searching for the next tale waiting to be told, reading, writing, and polishing nonstop. I thought I'd give these a try.

As Alex and Maggie sat, I read the old tried and true folktales, waiting for boredom to take hold. Instead, I found them transfixed in awe, totally engaged, commenting without thinking. Their imaginations exploded. I would never choose these stories, yet their minds and hearts were touched. I was gob smacked. The kids wanted to hear another and another. I realized that

these tales were still being told because they contain some hidden magic.

Of course, that's not the whole truth. As the teller I apply the craft of bringing life to the characters, voices, timing, volume, pacing and pauses punctuating necessary for engaging an audience. The stories worked their magic through me, with me, for them. My grandchildren were glued. They were transfixed. They corrected me when I jokingly misspoke. They listened so hard that they couldn't sit still. They echoed the repetition. I was shocked.

Choosing a 'good' story, I am wrong as often as I am right. I continue to be reminded that it is not my job as a teller to prejudge the 'success' of a tale. Sure, I offer tales that I prefer, that I love, that make me happy, but my job as a teller is to serve the audience and their taste may differ from mine.

My job is to constantly assemble an ever-changing menu, to offer something for everyone, fresh stories served up steaming hot and appealing to the senses. In bringing my best to the plate I gain satisfaction from serving the audience and taking pleasure in their experience of devouring a well-prepared tale. The cook prepares the meal. He doesn't have to eat it. He doesn't even have to like it. Save the judgment for your effort. And let the meat and potatoes of a well told story stand alone.

Now? I have two or three more stories added to my collection of tellable tales. Perhaps I will be blessed enough, brave enough, smart or lucky enough to continue to place my taste subservient to my audiences'. Perhaps I will also be lucky enough to continue to have audiences who challenge me to listen to them when I take a chance and tell a story, paying forward the magic of tales told long ago.

Mike Perry's broad and adventurous career experience has taken him from the circus to the Census Bureau, from major motion pictures to maintenance man. He has taught Elementary School, and performed as a corporate edu-tainer. He was a teller at the Old North State Storytelling Festival in 2021. He may be contacted at: Mike@MikePerry.biz



FROM ANOTHER TIME . . . BY CONNIE REGAN-BLAKE



Ray telling to a full house at the National Storytelling Festival (Photo by Tom Raymond)

It was a fall afternoon in 1973, in Jonesborough, TN. Ray Hicks came down from the mountains, bearing old-world gifts for all of us in this modern world. That day changed my life – and the course of storytelling in the United States and beyond.

After the first festival, Ray was invited to tell stories every year. His very presence - the way he dressed, his old-time ways of talking and telling stories as if every listener was a sitting on his front porch - all of it generated so much media attention that word about storytelling started spreading throughout the country.

The festival grew from 60 of us sitting outside in front of a flat-bed truck with hay bales to over 10,000 folks, coming from all over the world – and returning, year after year - as if it were a family reunion! gathering together under big tents to listen to stories.

And other storytelling festivals started sprouting up all over the country!!

I believe that Ray knew he had become, in a sense, the face of the storytelling revival. He was willing to take that on.

But even with all that publicity and fame – the Hicks never did really profit.

Ray got invites to go and tell in other places – but mostly he and Rosa stayed at the homeplace - and the world came to them!

When I was up there visiting in those early days, you never knew who else might show up. It could be a film crew coming from CBS Evening News or a journalist from the LA Times or People Magazine or the National Geographic wanting to do a feature on Ray.

I once met a linguist who had come over from England wanting to study this unique, old timey way that

Ray spoke. One anthropologist said that Ray's way of talking, what they called his archaic language – with his Elizabethan accent . . . it was a way of talking that George Washington and Daniel Boone would recognize and be comfortable with.

One time, Ray told me a big shiny black sedan pulled up and a man climbed out, dressed in a fancy suit with a hat on – in the middle of the day! The man introduced himself, said he had traveled all across the country, said, "I've come from the "Tonight Show."

He announced to Ray, with a bit of a flourish, "that the famous TV star, Johnny Carson wants you to come to California and be on his television show."

Well, the Hicks didn't have a TV - no phone, no contact with that world.

Ray smiled - said, "Well . . . tell Johnny if he wants to hear a story he can come here anytime - and I'll tell him 'bout Jack"

And through it all, Ray and Rosa so good hearted and generous . . . whenever anyone pulled up on Old Mountain Road, they'd both stop their chores – and welcome the scores of folks making that journey to seek Ray out, hear his stories, sit in his presence and take in some of his mountain wisdom.

I had a golden opportunity to reflect on all this and more with my recent telling of my new show, "From Another Time: Celebrating the Legacy of Ray Hicks" at the 50th National Storytelling Festival this year. What a journey and a joy it has been!

Continued next page



Connie with Rosa and Ray at the Hicks homeplace over 45 years ago!

And an extra bonus, my husband Phil drove three of the Hicks children to the festival so they could also hear it. So, emotion and heart—filled for me to tell this story with them sitting front row center.

The audience feedback has been terrific with several folks encouraging me – and offering to help write grants to do performances of this show all over NC and beyond! SO, if you missed it, maybe I can bring it to your community.

I think back to Ray asking me not to let folks forget about him – and to “Tell on, tell on.”

May we all do just that!



Great to ‘share the stage’ with Ray again!
(Photo by Tom Raymond)

This year’s 50th National Storytelling Festival marks 50 years that Connie has been at this festival either as a storyteller or serving as an Emcee. For more info on Connie and Ray, see www.StoryWindow.com and www.RayHicks.com

Morning Patterns by Marva Moss

Shadows dance
across the bedroom walls,
welcoming a new day!
Into the windows -
through thin curtains,
sparkling jewels of
morning sunlight,
create beautiful designs
and
lacy patterns.

Marva Moss is a retired educator and story-weaver, sharing her stories through the oral tradition and as a writer. Marva broadens her horizons by taking college courses. She may be contacted at: owlcottage@atmc.net.

Mostly Sunny by Jim Payne

Comfy, warm kitchen
Coffee perking busily
Bacon sizzling, cradled
In cast iron skillet
Eggs, whipped, waiting in bowl.

Forecast for today
Says partly cloudy.
From where I’m sitting
It’s going to be
Mostly sunny.

Jim Payne is a poet and short story writer. He currently serves on the NCSG board. He may be contacted at: jpaynehorizon@gmail.com

Moon Cycle Guide to Writing and Telling or the Value of What is Not Said by Joan Leotta



On Saturday, September 17, 2022, I gave a talk to the North Carolina Poetry Society on how narrative informs all poetry and how poetry informs narrative in general. Using the metaphor of the moon's cycles, I explained that all communication is basically a story, that humans are wired for story, even if the entire traditional story arc is not employed in all of the actual telling—in a poem or in a spoken, performance, narrative. I used the illustration of the moon's cycles to explain what I meant. Even when only a sliver of the moon appears, the rest of the moon is there—our minds will fill it in—I used two illustrations. A haiku of mine, published on July 29 in *Haikuniverse*:

an owl continually questions
my identity
as I watch the stars

I pointed out to them that there was a lot more going on here—why was I out there questioning my own existence? I had not told the why the echo of the owl's whoooo whoo, affected me. In fact I did not even mention the sound of the owl because we all know that sound in English is Whoooo, whoo. I told them, "I am looking at the stars—do I conclude definitively?"

In other words, there is more to the story. The human mind fills it in. Like the bit of the moon that is there but hidden when we see a crescent moon, the negative space as they say in art, is as important to the mind of the reader as what we do say." They absorbed this, many commenting later that they had never before considered the impact of what they did NOT say on their readers.

When we storytellers are telling on stage, often with a fable or short fairy tale, there could be a lot more to the story. We don't always tie it up in a bow, with the words "happily, ever after!" I have had children ask me if the ant and the grasshopper became friends, if the grasshopper learned a lesson. The human mind wants to know. Sometimes when performing I use props or

sounds to take the place of some parts of the story arc—in particular description of the main characters in the beginning. If we give them a sound that can indicate their personality, it saves a lot of explanation—sort of a three-quarter moon. We can use repetition or call and response to move the story forward, maybe shortening the middle to two points of action, and for the end, we can have the repeated phrase tie it all up. We tellers also use poetic technique to enrich our performances. How often has an elegant image sometimes aided by a costume or movement or facial contortion painted the idea we are trying to explicate in the minds and hearts of our audiences? For example, when I tell the story of the wind and the sun, I use images for the strength of the wind's chill and the sun's strong smile.

For the wind I go from gentle movement of leaves, to stirring up leaves into a pile and pushing rain on our faces and for the third, an icy blast that pours snow and ice down onto our roads and houses. For the sun, I go from a spring day with flowers nodding in the sun, to a day when we want popsicles to cool off, and third to a day it is so hot we want to spend all day in the pool. Images, metaphor, repetition, alliteration, are keystones of both poetry and of our performance art. We can and do supplement our words with music, costumes, props. We can share the stage with our listeners, further impressing the point that they are a part of the story and can take it away with them and make it their own.

In addition, as a person who writes in many forms, genres, journalism, essay, fiction, flash fiction, as well as poetry and in addition to performing story, I showed the audience the advantage of moving between forms, both as a writing exercise and to save a piece that may have failed as a poem. Joseph Bathanti, former poet laureate once told me that he decides what form, short story, novel, poem, etc. to use by letting the topic choose its own form. May sound esoteric but it actually works for me too. Sometimes, however I try a form and a piece fails. If I think the piece is good, I translate it into another form. Right now I am taking a failed poem and turning it into an essay.

Then as I gave the group an exercise to test and warm up their creative muscle, I gave them three

Continued next page

words they had to use pond, sky, cloud, asking them to set these three words at dawn or sunset. They had five minutes to write. Afterwards, several agreed to share what they had written.

The responses were amazing! One man wrote a truly humorous piece about interacting with nature, another woman wrote a brilliant piece about the conference day, and another, a lovely piece about these elements in Iceland. I challenged her to see if that also worked with a piece of travel writing and then I handed out the prime points of how to shift a piece of writing from one form to another.

Key to choosing any form of writing is that you have to know its parameters or requirements and read extensively in that form. Since I am an omnivorous reader, that is not a problem. To make sure I understand the forms I want to try, I study the form's requirements and read examples, many examples. I have taken courses in flash fiction, short fiction, essay, and have been a journalist for thirty years (yes, have taken courses in that too!). Then I ask these questions of myself when I choose to switch a piece of writing from one form to another:

Joan's Five Questions to ask when switching forms

1. What are the basic elements of this form?
For example, a news feature will include who, what, when, where and why? Some of it may be put in what is called a sidebar, but the story will have a full beginning, middle, end, a complete narrative arc.

2. Requirements for a type of poem? Have you picked out a form to use? Does this form require a full story arc? If so, do I know where I am going or do I think I will discover it in the writing?
3. Will I manipulate the arc? (e.g. start in the middle, give a question at the end instead of a true ending—fables often use this.)
4. Have I read many examples of the form I want to use?
5. If it is a performance piece, or even a written piece aimed at a certain demographic, have I also considered the needs of my audience, what the audience will be expecting?

It was a wonderful day. Many people came up to me afterward and told me that they would reexamine their work to see where letting the reader supply the details could be worked into their own poems and told me that they had never considered the concept of negative space in the written arts—what is not said being as important as what is said.

I hope your writing and story performance can be enriched by applying my moon cycle principle to your work, considering what is not said explicitly, and that it will free your creativity to do different things on stage and in your writing as well.

Joan Leotta, an award-winning author, is currently serving on our Board as the Coastal Regional Representative. She may be contacted at: joanleotta@gmail.com

What's Happening with Our Storytellers!

Tim Lowry at Timpanogos

In September, **TIM LOWRY** told his new story "10,000 Tries: The Life of Thomas Edison" at the 33rd annual **Timpanogos Storytelling Festival** in Utah. It was received with a standing ovation! Several folks asked, "How did you craft that story?" Well, Tim responded "it wasn't easy! Mr. Edison only left behind 3,400 notebooks and over 250,000 signed documents! However, I know a few tricks of the trade."

Thanks Nancy Reeder by Lee Lyons

A special thanks to Nancy Reeder. Nancy recently performed at the Dahlia Festival in Highlands, NC. Her very real portrayal of Grandma Gatewood was both entertaining and educational. Grandma became famous in 1955 for being the first woman to hike the Appalachian Trail. A must tell for hiking groups, students, and anyone interested in the history of that time. The program takes about an hour, with her own personal history of hiking the AT and the Pacific Crest Trail. Nancy is the perfect person to bring Grandma to life.

Zig-Zag Writers © by Sylvia Payne

This past summer I was reminded of one of my favorite children's stories, *Charlotte's Web*, by E. B. White. White loved animals, and was inspired to write *Charlotte's Web* after watching a spider spin a web on his farm.

White's book became a Newbery Award-winning book in 1952. For myself, Charlotte's story came to life anew in the 2006 film.

Charlotte's story led me to my own backyard recently. In early September I discovered a small web outside over our deck door. Attached to this web was an unusual pear-shaped sac. I was in awe. It had to be completed by an accomplished artist.



I was puzzled... why was it here and who might the artist be? A praying mantis I discovered camouflaged on a dead flower? But a mantis' sac isn't shaped in this manner. And why would a mantis leave its sac hanging from a web?

Ahh, I had a possible clue, remembering two yellow and black garden spiders (*Argiope aurantia*) in our backyard! After an online search, this pearshaped sac was definitely crafted by a garden spider. I adore these bright colored spiders. We often have them during the summer. I remember seeing these spiders in my Grandmother's garden as a child.

This past summer we hosted four yellow garden spiders with their webs anchored between flowering

bushes to give protection from the wind. These spiders always place their signature in the center of the web. It seems similar to continuous z's or a perpendicular row of zig-zags. They are often called writing spiders and are always female.



The yellow and black garden spider weaves an immaculate silk web from a liquid inside her body. Since their webs are circular, they are called orb spiders. The signature has a weave of silk thicker than other parts of the web.

Her most elegant creation, her egg sac is created near the end of her life. Following her work on this sophisticated creation, she dies.

To the human eye her signature stands out in bold letters of white. No one knows for certain its purpose. Although some scientists think it may warn birds not to fly into the web and destroy it.

I love having these writers in our yard, as they feed on a number of insects such as aphids, flies, and mosquito's.

Hopefully the summer of 2023 will bring new black and yellow writers from the lovely orb sac I discovered. Descendants of *Charlotte* perhaps.

Sylvia Payne grew up hearing her mother tell family stories. A former children's librarian, she has been telling stories and presenting workshops for over 40 years. She served 18 years as a NC Humanities Road Scholar until the program was closed during COVID.

"Sharing the power of story to connect and comfort, to make us laugh and help keep our hearts open is the best balm I know to survive and stay sane in these bewildering and challenging times." –
Storyteller, Noa Baum

"A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his father, but borrowed from his children." –
John James Audubon

NCSG SPONSORED EVENT

WINTER WORKSHOP: TAMING THE WILD PERSONAL NARRATIVE with Donna Washington

When: JAN 20, 2023 AT 4:00 PM – JAN 22, 2023
UNTIL 12:00 PM EST

Where: Fort Caswell, 100 Caswell Beach Road
Fort Caswell, NC



Lots of us tell personal narratives. How do you decide which ones to tell? How do you end them? Why do some of them work so well and others fall flat? How do you pair them with folklore? How long should they be? In this workshop, we will be talking about and working on the wild personal narrative. We will find them, capture them, and make them dance for us! Bring a tale to share, finished or unfinished.

The Fort Caswell Retreat Center will once again serve as the location for the North Carolina Storytelling Guild Winter Workshop. The retreat center is located on the grounds of the Baptist Assembly at Caswell Beach, on Oak Island, near Southport, NC. The center offers historic facilities with modern amenities and relaxing views. Rooms are shared, with two people per room (two double beds and a private bathroom). Meals include a Friday night dinner, full breakfast and lunch on

www.eventbrite.com/e/taming-the-wild-personal-narrative-workshop-with-donna-washington-registration-407089384307

Saturday, our famous Saturday night supper of Stone Soup, a continental breakfast on Sunday, and a bounty of snacks!

Space is limited to 30 people. We expect to sell out for Donna's workshop! Before you pre-register, contact Steve Tate below to see if space is available. Please note that once you have registered, no refunds are allowed. If you cannot attend, you must sell, give away, or forfeit your space at the workshop.

NCSG Members Registration per person: \$250
Non-members Price per person \$300 (if you are not a member of our Guild, you will save money by becoming one. Goto www.ncstoryguild.org. Join Today Scholarships available!

Contact: stevenkenttate@gmail.com
for info and an application.

You may register on eventbrite below:

ADDITIONAL FESTIVAL PHOTOS



Janice Curtis Greene,



Brian McDowell, and Josh Goforth

Answer key

1. 50
2. Thomas Edison
3. Mae Jemison, America's First Black Female Astronaut
4. Tribute Tales
5. November 4-5
6. Nancy Roberts
7. Misuse of a word in a most unexpected way, especially with another one that has a similar sound



Linda Gorham spends an insane amount of time listening to comedy channels on Sirius XM in her car on her way to play golf and tennis. She used to teach a humor workshop, but it was too much work. Now she spends her days in semi-retirement trying to figure out what semi-retirement really means.

www.LindaGorham.com

TELLABRATION!®

with the Asheville Storytelling Circle

at the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway

Featuring
Kim Weitkamp



WITH ASHEVILLE STORYTELLING CIRCLE MEMBERS:



Catherine Yael Scrotta



Charlie St. Clair



Portraying
President Mrs.
Lincoln



Roy Harris, Emcee

Sunday, November 20, 2-4p.m.

Tickets \$10 at EventBrite or

for reservations or information call 828.274.1123 or 828.777.9177

Accepting Articles

Articles, stories, and storytelling news are needed for NCSG's Spring 2023 issue of the Journal of Tar Heel Tellers.

We ask that you include storytelling events that you are aware of (must be open to the public). They will also be included on NCSG's website 'Events' page at:

<http://www.ncstoryguild.org/events.html>

Allow one to two weeks notice for your event to be posted on NCSG's website 'Events' page.

Deadline: March 15, 2023

Send to: [sypayne@bellsouth.net](mailto:sylpayne@bellsouth.net).



TICKETS \$10 at EventBrite. For reservations or information call 828.274.1123 or 828.777.9177