

Journal of Tar Seel Tellers

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Spring 2021
NC Storytelling Guild
Official Newsletter

Old North State STORY TELLING

FESTIVAL

Save the date! LOOK at this terrific team for our 2021 Festival

November 5 & 6, 2021 at The Cary Theater AND also Online.

Our 2020 Festival was a big success. We welcomed viewers from 22 states for our online, on-demand event. Thanks to all of you for your support and to the tellers and technicians for their creativity, hard work, and patience. Special thanks to Session Studios for their quality production services.

We are excited to announce that we have five featured storytellers this year.

Three are from North Carolina: Milbre Burch, Willa Brigham, and Josh Goforth.

The other two are: Andy Offutt Irwin from Georgia and Kevin Kling from Minnesota.

Festival Website: <https://www.oldnorthstatestorytellingfestival.com/>



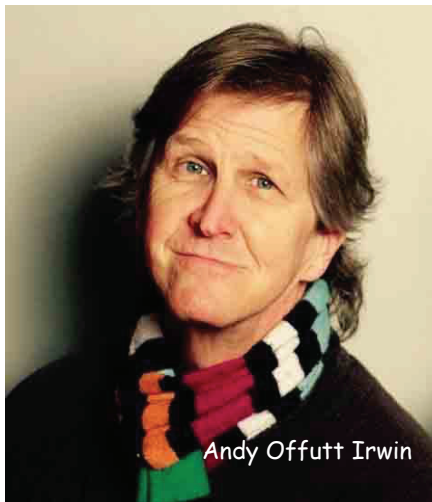
Milbre Burch



Josh Goforth



Willa Brigham



Andy Offutt Irwin

Facebook Page

[www.facebook.com/
OldNorthStateStorytellingFestival/](https://www.facebook.com/OldNorthStateStorytellingFestival/)



Kevin Kling

More details on following page

MILBRE BURCH

<https://www.kindcrone.com>

Milbre Burch is a GRAMMY-nominated recording artist, a nationally known storyteller, a veteran teaching artist, and a sought-after story coach. Coming to storytelling from physical theatre, she combines gesture and language in stories from literature, legend, and lore. She has been featured eight times at the National Storytelling Festival and performed across the US, Europe, and Asia.

Since the eighties, Milbre has toured shows, presented at conferences, and taught workshops across the Old North State. She has appeared at festivals in Asheville, Blowing Rock, Winston Salem, and Wake County, and retreated with fellow tellers at Fort Caswell, Little Switzerland, Lake Lure, and Chimney Rock.

Recently returned to Chapel Hill, NC, after a lengthy hiatus in the Midwest, Milbre is delighted to be a member of the NC Storytelling Guild once more. She looks forward to the 2021 Old North State Storytelling Festival as a homecoming celebration in this beloved community.

WILLA BRIGHAM

<https://www.willabrigham.com>

Welcome to the wonderful and wacky world of Willa Brigham. Willa is a Two Time Emmy Award Winner. She is also an Inspirational Speaker, Storyteller, Writer, Performing Artist, and Midnight Quilter. She is an extraordinary one-woman adventure. Her contagious energy entertains, inspires, challenges, and moves audiences of all ages. She has six delightful CDs and one colorful and engaging book to her credit. This national talent has shared her presentations with audiences of all ages, from the Exchange Place in Jonesborough, Tennessee, to Caribbean cruise ships. This exceptionally versatile artist is as comfortable in the Board Room of a Fortune 500 company as she is in a class of preschoolers. A day with Willa will make you feel better about yourself and better about our world.

JOSH GOFORTH

<https://www.blueridgeheritage.com/artist/josh-goforth/>

Josh grew up in Madison County, North Carolina, surrounded by the music and stories of his ancestors. He is a highly accomplished storyteller and old-time, bluegrass, and swing musician playing close to 20 instruments. His fiddling was featured in the movie Songcatcher, both onscreen and on the soundtrack. He has performed in all 50 states, throughout Europe, Asia, and Australia, and graced such stages as Carnegie Hall and The Grand Ole Opry. He was nominated for a Grammy for his 2009 release with David Holt, entitled Cutting Loose. He is a favorite at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN.

ANDY OFFUTT IRWIN

<https://andyirwin.com>

With a manic, Silly Putty voice, astonishing mouth noises, and heart-filled stories, Andy Offutt Irwin is equal parts mischievous schoolboy and the Marx Brothers, peppered with a touch of the Southern balladeer. He has been a Featured Teller at the National Storytelling Festival eleven times and is a perennial favorite at the International Storytelling Center's Teller-in-Residence Series.

A storyteller, theatre director, singer-songwriter, and Shakespearean actor, Andy was Artist-in-Residence at Emory University's Oxford College from 1991 to 2007. He has performed at LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts in New York, The Library of Congress, Walt Disney World, and a whole mess of theatres, colleges, and festivals all over the United States

Andy lives in Covington, Georgia. He thinks he is funny.

Continued on following page.

KEVIN KLING

<http://www.kevinkling.com>

Kevin Kling, best known for his popular commentaries on National Public Radio's All Things Considered and his storytelling stage shows like Tales from the Charred Underbelly of the Yule Log, deliver hilarious, often tender stories. Kling's autobiographical tales are as enchanting as they are true to life: hopping freight trains, getting hit by lightning, performing his banned play in Czechoslovakia,

growing up in Minnesota, and eating things before knowing what they were.

Kevin lives in Minneapolis. He describes his zodiac sign as "Minnesota with Iowa rising..." He has received numerous arts grants and fellowships. The National Endowment for the Arts, The McKnight Foundation, The Minnesota State Arts Board, The Bush Foundation, The Jerome Foundation, and others have recognized Kling's artistry. In 2014 Mayor RT Rybak named Kevin "Minneapolis Story Laureate." He is a regular main stage storyteller at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN.

Regional Get Togethers

Coastal Region with Joan Leotta

Members in the Coastal Region held a March meeting on Zoom, organized by Joan Leotta. The topic of discussion was on various ways to promote storytelling in the region. Joan commented, "I have been working with the Brunswick County Arts Council on storytelling ops for us, possibly at a local festival in June." Joan's email:

joanleotta@gmail.com

Piedmont Triangle Region with Henry Vogel

Henry Vogel organized a workshop: SOCIAL MEDIA ZOOM WORKSHOP led by Cynthia Raxter. The Topic: Social Media Marketing - Conquering Those Dragons, took place on Saturday, April 24, 2021. Henry offered this workshop to all Guild members. He is the board representative for the Piedmont Triangle Region. He also is also in charge of the Zoom availability for our Guild's meetings and workshops. Henry's email: henry.vogel@gmail.com

Mountains Region with Nancy Reeder

Mountains Region Board representative, Nancy Reeder, worked with Donna Marie Todd to set up a Mountain Region workshop. Donna agreed to share her expertise with *Designing, Visualizing and Voicing Characters*, to take place on Saturday, May 8, 2021. Nancy has invited all NCSG members who are interested to attend. Nancy's email:

nancyreeder@gmail.com

Southern Piedmont Region

Zoom Opportunities by Deborah Winkler

The NCSG Zoom account has opened up wonderful opportunities for Guild members! It is giving our Guild more ways to meet and to work together. The Southern Piedmont Region is now trying to have monthly meetings. The first meeting included members within the region. The second meeting invited all Guild members. Both were informal meetings with plenty of time for spontaneous exchanges. Everyone who was in attendance participated! All ideas for the meetings came from suggestions given by members of the region. These meetings were interesting and refreshing.

This was another opportunity for exploring connections. On March 27, Lona Bartlett presented her Educational Workshop—Connecting Stories to Curriculum and the entire Guild was invited! On April 20, our region met for a fun gathering of Truth or Lies, which was a segway to stories.

Southern Piedmont Region is inviting writers from two writers' groups to join their meeting, on May 14. This is happening with the help of Vincent Veza. Future meetings will take various shapes.

Whatever future we create for ourselves as storytellers, these meetings on screens will likely be part of it. The NCSG is helping us to be ready.

Deborah Winkler: winklerdeborah@yahoo.com
Southern Piedmont Representative

JOURNAL OF TAR HEEL TELLERS

Editor, Sylvia Payne
1621 Nathaniel Street,
Newton, NC 28658
NCSG Website:
www.ncstoryguild.org

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Calendar listings are free.

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.*

Spring Cast of Characters

Sylvia Payne - Editor

*Contributors, Jenel Behm, JA Bolton, Linda
Gorham, Michael Reno Harrell, Joan Leotta, Ray
Mendenhall, Marva Moss, Kanute Rarey, Connie
Regan-Blake, Terry Rollins, Brian Sturm, and
Deborah Winkler*



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

Martin Garish, Gary Mitchell and **John Golden** completed their CD recording, of, *When We Were Cowboys*, before John passed away. . . **Nancy Reeder** and **Sarah Beth Nelson** have been storytelling contributors to Stories on the Square, a monthly virtual program hosted by **Kanute Rarey** . . . in March **Joan Leotta** enjoyed sharing a Syrian Tale in English on Italian radio. During the show, she also spoke about how tales unite us and promote respect for other cultures . . . Good news to hear **Sherry Lovett** and husband, David have moved back to the NC Mountains.

When you write a story, you're telling yourself the story. When you rewrite, your main job is taking out all the things that are not the story. -Stephen King

Spring Forward!

from the editor's desk

Birds' singing reached me from nearby trees. Distinctive voices of the Carolina wren, robins and sweet little chickadees. Music to my ears as I watched two small butterflies, one white and the other yellow, flutter across the back yard. Following behind, came a tiny light gray butterfly heading toward a row of holly bushes. I was sure this little one was a gray hairstreak, also known as the gossamer-winged butterfly. They are fascinating little creatures if you can spot them close-up. The butterflies have arrived right on time.

Movement drew my eye to a nearby tree. There was Mr. Bluebird, robed in his dazzling coat of blue, heading toward our bluebird house. His mouth clutched building materials for his nest. He perched on the rooftop and stood sentinel, allowing the world to appreciate his claim. Then quickly disappeared inside. Our bluebirds have returned home.



Gray hairstreak

What a lovely spring day. Tiny buds are bursting forth from our burgundy Merlot trees. Other deciduous trees are showing off various shades of green. Bradford pear trees have completed their fashion show across town, now replaced with a new show of dogwoods. Next door fading buttercups droop their heads.

New thoughts, ideas and stories have a beginning, just as our season of Spring. Stories begin as tiny thoughts or seeds. For these stories to mature, we must nurture them, and tend them carefully. We sometimes struggle, but with perseverance, our stories can eventually grow and finally blossom. This Journal issue is filled with many vivid, colorful blossoms!

Submit articles for JTHT Fall 2021 issue to:
Sylvia Payne, JTHT Editor, 1621 Nathaniel Street, Newton, NC 28658.
E-mail: sylpayne@bellsouth.net
Deadline for Fall Issue: September 15, 2021.



President's Message *Robin Kitson*

Hi to my fellow Guild members.

Last year I was slipped an overdose of sugar cubes and in the resultant haze accepted the position of NCSG Guild president. See, that is what happens when you have been in

an organization for a long time...people know how to influence and hypnotize you. Once I awakened from my sugar high and realized I was to become lead horse on the NCSG Conestoga Wagon Train; I began THINKING, THINKING, THINKING.

Switching centuries: I then put on my wig-hat (a real thinking cap) and thought some more until I came up with a focus. I said to myself, "Self, I will spend time getting the NCSG out to colleges and promote storytelling to theater students. We can get younger folks involved. Indeed, we can fan out and meet those younger folks. Those who think telling personal stories at the Moth is the be all and end all. We can rope them in and we can pull this train together. After all there is a lot in it for them, they just don't know it yet."

I was mighty pleased with myself.

Satisfied, my mind DRIFTED, DRIFTED, DRIFTED...yawn, I am SOOO sleepy after all that thinking. Talking to myself again, "Self you need to pull off that hot wig-hat and sleep on your worthy goals. Indeed, you can envision them hitched to the wagon, dream of enlightening younger folks about a storytelling career, and having competent Guild members to take over pulling this train...since we old folks are not far from pushing up daisies.

And I slept peacefully.

Suddenly, BAM, a crash! I was sure I heard it, or was it a screech? I awakened with a start. The earth had gone tilt, or did it blow

up? It was my thoughts again, "We, the Guild, have to suddenly adjust. We now serve lots of unemployed storytellers. Some of em might be lonely too. We have lots of talented people who have stories to tell but where?" THINKING, THINKING, THINKING, I took all of this 'self-talk' to the board and we did some real-world planning! Wow!

We shifted our goal to getting the Guild a Zoom account. Today, we have accomplished said mission. Our Zoom account allows us to give members an answer to "What's In It For Me?" after we had to cancel "in person" workshops. Indeed, we have allotted funds to regional representatives so they can pay members to produce workshops. Guild members get workshops for free...yeah! Finally, something good in a year of traveling upon an old wagon trail of not-so-good".

Given we have a Zoom account the next task was, what to present, how to get the best bang for the buck. More THINKING, THINKING, THINKING. Over the years the one topic we all like is marketing. So have 2 scheduled workshops to help folks from different perspectives.

January 16th Annette Simmons presented a Corporate Storytelling workshop at no cost. It was highly informative and attended by 23 members.

March 27th Lona Bartlett helped our Guild understand how to connect storytelling to Educational Standards in schools. In my mind that is a "if you say the right things you are more apt to get hired" thing and that is especially useful. FYI Lona has been telling stories in schools for over 30 years, so she knows thing one and thing two about marketing to schools.

April 24th Cynthia Raxter gave a presentation on how to use social media to produce events and/or market yourself online. Cynthia typically has 800 people attend her online events which tells us she is on to "something". She shared that something in her workshop.

Continued on following page

There are also monthly statewide chit chats as well. If you have a topic to discuss at one let me know. The goal is to get to know each other better. We all have gifts to share.

May and June are up for grabs. My goal is to help someone who has lost income make a buck or two and keep their confidence alive. Workshops are always a good way to get into corporate America, so if you know that you know, what we don't know, let us know.

If you have a workshop sitting on the shelf awaiting an audience, contact your regional rep. If any other idea is burning a hole in your soul pass it to me at nanirobin@gmail.com

A different task while the world went tilt has been to improve our website. To that end Sylvia Payne presented board suggestions to our webmaster. Now we have a spruced-up

website as follows:

- **Events** monthly calendar which is very interational so you can look and see what might be of interest more easily.
- **Pay by Credit card on PayPal option.**
- **Improved Storyteller Directory** We changed the layout to give viewers a quicker thumbnail sketch of each teller.
- **We have an improved Directory Search** for viewers searching for a storyteller.

My year as president ends in June. Thanks to all the board members who worked with me and the friends who helped me along the way. I did my best during this unconventional year.

Robin Kitson

Todd General Store Gone Up in Smoke

We sadly report that Todd General Store, in Todd NC, was destroyed by fire in late February of this year. The store was quite the gathering place for locals and extremely popular with tourists during tourist season.

The store was established in 1914 and was on the National Register of Historic Places. For many years in the summertime, Todd General Store featured weekly events, including live bluegrass music, Storytelling, and book signings by local authors. A number of our NCSG members performed there as storytellers.

A Go-Fund-Me page has been set up to help the owners, Matt and Andrea Connell.

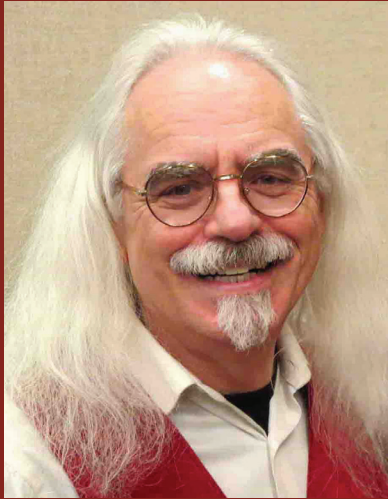
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-the-connells-and-the-todd-general-store>



Orville Hicks and Doyle Pace inside Todd General Store. They performed there in 2019.

A WORD ABOUT the PAST YEAR

by MICHAEL RENO
HARRELL



I would like to say something about storytelling that has become even more apparent to me over the last year. To me and to so many of us who are storytellers, story listeners and just plain story nerds, one of the most important and rewarding things about hanging around the genre is the people one meets out there in the world of storytelling.

As I write this it has been one year and three days since I was last on

a stage in front of a live audience. That was at the Azalea Storytelling Festival in LaGrange, Georgia. The Azalea Festival is a special one for me. I've done it either four or five times now, I don't recall which. Hey, at my age I'm happy to get that close. This last weekend was to have been their twenty-fifth festival, a milestone. But because of Covid they wound up doing a pocket sized version on line and called it the twenty-four-point-five festival in order to hopefully have a real twenty-fifth celebration next year.

As with so many festivals, the folks who put Azalea on are just wonderful and after twenty-four-point-five years they have gotten to where the event runs like a fine watch. The audiences know just what to expect and they come ready to enjoy stories and the roster always includes some of my favorite tellers and closest friends. So, it is a pleasure to be in that atmosphere from this fan's point of view. Plus I always look forward to spending time with the wonderful staff members, many of whom have been there since the beginning and have become dear friends of we tellers.

Joyce Morgan has headed up that fine group of volunteers since the festival's inception and she and her husband Bill have become close friends of Joan and me and are

Southern hospitality incarnate. We could never pass LaGrange without stopping in for a visit.

There are so many festivals that offer that same kind of hospitality to all of us who love storytelling. Those of us who are lucky enough to travel America telling stories as well as all of us who love listening to stories are like family. I know that phrase has been bandied about a lot over the years, but there is really a nugget of truth in it. I think it is the main reason that once someone finds storytelling they keep coming back. There really is such a sense of camaraderie at a storytelling event. We tellers are just a part of that crowd of story lovers.

This past year the thing I have missed more than standing on a stage and getting to tell stories is getting to be among the people I care about as much as I do my biological family, that is my storytelling family. That being said, I can't wait to get back out there among the wonderful world of storytelling folks!

Until then, stay safe and well.

Michael Reno Harrell is an award-winning songwriter, as well as a veteran storyteller and entertainer, and he's from the South... the Southern Appalachian Mountains to hone it a bit finer. You may contact him at: mike@michaelreno.com

What's Happening With Jeannie McPhail

Free and Tellable Content

Need some easy-to-share picture books for family or storytelling? NCSG member and author, J.A. McPhail is featuring free content on her website. In 2021 she is sharing six picture book stories, delivered to your inbox every other month, with corresponding coloring pages to download and print. Go to jamcphail.com and scroll down to the "Reader Bonuses" banner, click on "Learn More," enter your email address, and enjoy! The first two stories are already available and will be

automatically sent when you subscribe: "The Animal's Bookcase" and "The Cousins' Backyard Mystery Club and Mr. Schnebly's Dragon." Coloring pages can be found under the banner below Reader Bonuses. Help Jeannie spread the word to parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, and babysitters! Happy story sharing!

The second story listed above recently went online. The third will be available mid-May.

www.jamcphail.com
www.facebook.com/jamcphailbooks

TRIBUTE TO CHARLOTTE ROSS

June 12, 2041 – April 04, 2021



"We were missing her in Asheville and wondering how and where she was. Trish Dumser's letter was great in telling all pertinent details of Charlotte's illness and came from the heart. I can see Charlotte walking out her stories that were full of

collected 3,500 or more stories. I could have listened to her tell stories all day long. When she told, her delivery was truly unique. She had that unusual rhythmic flow of language like no one else. As she told, her body got caught up in the rhythm of her voice. We lost a complete library of Southern history and folklore upon Charlotte's death." - *Sylvia Payne*

"Charlotte was a grand lady, and a great storyteller. Mimi and I always looked forward to her when we had an opportunity to hear her telling. She will remain strong in our memories." - *Marvin Cole*

"She was passionate about the Appalachian mountain region and culture and shared that love with her late husband Carl, who was a tenured history professor at Appalachian State University. In the 1990s and beyond Charlotte entertained audiences all over the region. She advised many authors including Sharyn McCrumb, who based the character 'Nora Bonesteel' in her 'ballad' series of books on Charlotte. She taught at Appalachian State University, East Tennessee State University, Caldwell Community College and the University of Pennsylvania." - *From Charlotte's Obituary*

"Charlotte could draw the listener into the story like no one else. The way in which she took the stage and then announced a place and a date, we were instantly with her at the place at the time the story was happening. I never tired of hearing the same story again and would be disappointed at first if the story she chose to tell was one I hadn't heard before. But the new story always became another favorite. Our storytelling community has lost a great teller and historian." - *Sandra Gudger*

details necessary to make the stories and people in them alive. I love the "who-ee!" story. Just like her. I can hear her saying it. She was a great part of storytelling in North Carolina and friend to us all! And...she will be keeping the stories going wherever she is." - *Gwenda LedBetter*

"Charlotte Ross was a woman of insight, talented teller. Always a kind and wise word ready to share. My favorite times with her were long chats at Wildacres." - *Joan Leotta*

"I celebrate the life of one of the most amazing storytellers I've ever known. Charlotte Ross was an expert on Appalachian folktales. She captivated her listeners and commanded her stage as she told stories of pioneer families, soldiers, childhood relatives, and supernatural occurrences. Without a doubt, Charlotte was, 'The Legend Lady'.

I trust that Long Dog, the Boys of Cherokee, Grandma Clara, Dorcas Henry, Nancy Black, and all the others from her story repertoire were there to greet her on the other side!" - *Terry Rollins*

"Charlotte had such an insatiable appetite for her research of Appalachian stories and folklore. She



Cynthia Brown, Trish Dumser, Charlotte Ross, Sylvia Payne, at a NCSG Storytelling Festival in Brevard, NC



Terry Rollins with Charlotte Ross, at a NCSG Winter Workshop, Ft. Caswell

“I Can’t See It in my Mind”: Storytelling and Aphantasia by Brian Sturm



Francis Galton (1880) explored the reported mental imagery ability of adult scientists belonging to the Royal Society. He also compared them to 172 Charterhouse boys (boarding and day school students in England). He asked subjects to visualize an object (suggesting their morning breakfast table) and found that the scientists, more than the school boys, had limited visualization ability, often claiming to be completely unable to visualize. There was, however, a range of abilities on three factors: illumination (the dimness or brightness of the visualization), definition (the extent of detail in the visualization), and coloring (how distinct and natural were the colors in their visualization). He also asked whether his subjects could extrapolate beyond the known visual field (for example, imagining the unseen sides of a die). Knowing his limited sample size, he concludes, “my data being thus imperfectly before the reader, it would be premature in me to generalise. I trust, however, that what has been adduced is enough to give a fair knowledge of the variability of the visualising faculty in the English male sex.”¹

The lowest quartile of his respondents is what is currently of interest: those who reported being unable to visualize or create mental imagery. This is a condition currently known as “aphantasia” (term coined in 2015), and it is as yet little explored in the research literature.² My interest in it was sparked by a storytelling student who introduced me to the concept when I suggested that my students visualize the story unfolding around them so that they could share what they were seeing and increase the immediacy of their performances. She told me she was aphantasic and always had been. We began a semester-long conversation about how someone with aphantasia might best learn to be a storyteller.

We explored the implications for her as a storyteller and brainstormed possible processes she could follow to learn a story. She began by saying that she felt at a disadvantage in learning stories since she could not see them in her mind’s eye. We discussed whether it made sense for her to memorize the words she wanted to use, but she felt this would limit her ability to improvise and connect with her audience. I have had students in the past claim to be “word rememberers” who struggled with my approach to learning a story through visual images; perhaps they were aphantasic as well but just lacked the term to apply. As a participant in Bainbridge’s 2021 study stated, “Because I don’t have any images in my head, when I was trying to remember the photos, I have to store the pieces as words...I had to remember a list of objects rather than the picture.”³ Bainbridge’s study also found that aphantasics performed as well as control subjects on spatial location recall tests, so their ability to construct a gestalt sense of place was not impaired.

When I asked how she remembered descriptive details for a particular legend about bats she was learning, she replied, “When it came to telling the story, the descriptions were the least clear part of the story in my head. What I mean is that I didn’t have any trouble remembering my plot or what the characters were feeling or what part came next, but I did have a moment of panic when I said canaries have yellow feathers where I thought, ‘wait they DO have yellow feathers, right?’ in the middle of telling the story.” She continued that, “My visual description was based on the changes the sky goes through as dusk turns to night and the colors of various bird feathers. I can’t say I ‘saw’ those in my head as I was crafting or telling the story, but I can remember what they look like, so I drew on that to get my descriptions correct and vivid

A common value attributed to storytelling is its ability to invoke visual images in the minds of listeners. Audience members may say such things as: “I could see it all happening,” or “My imagination went wild with that story,” or “I was there in the story watching it all unfold.” Storytellers anticipate these reactions and work hard to open the doors of imagery for their listeners. But what happens when a listener cannot do mental visualization? How do they experience a story?

When asked to visualize an apple, many people can create a distinct and detailed image in their minds that represents the fruit. Whether they “see” a red or green apple, a crab apple, or a half-eaten apple, they can call up a clear mental image of the fruit.

Continued from previous page.

for my non-aphantasic listeners.” This ability is reminiscent of patient MX in Zeman’s (2010) study who used “alternative, non-standard, strategies to achieve his normal performance in imagery tasks.”⁴

She also said, “I had consistent trouble remembering to use the correct pronouns for my characters. Perhaps this is related to not being able to see the characters in my head? What helped was that I told myself the bat was Stellaluna, the children’s book character, and then I got the pronouns down.”

This student was a superb storyteller, emotionally evocative, engaging, and descriptive, to the point that I would not have known she faced this difficulty without her telling me so, as she had developed coping strategies since childhood and created new ones on demand, as the quotes above illustrate. This speaks to the flexibility of the brain, the existence of processing centers that handle different kinds of information, and the brain’s ability to marshal knowledge stored in several areas to address any particular need.⁵ It also reinforced for me, as a storytelling instructor and coach, to take an assets approach to my students, rather than a deficits approach; we all have unique abilities and strategies that enable us to function as individuals and in society. While aphantasics may not be able to

visualize, they can certainly become accomplished storytellers.

This student also didn’t seem to suffer as a listener; she was engaged, thoroughly enjoyed listening to stories, and didn’t feel her aphantasia reduced her pleasure as an audience member. As more research uncovers nuances in our ability to visualize, we may be able to understand its impact on our performances more clearly. For now, it is important that we know this condition exists, and perhaps we can do our own “citizen science” to determine whether aphantasia poses any real barriers for either storytellers or listeners.

(Endnotes)

1 Galton, F. (1880). Statistics of mental imagery. *Mind*, 5, 301–318. <https://academic.oup.com/mind/article/os-V/19/301/2848572>

2 For more information on aphantasia, please see: Keogh, R., & Pearson, J. (2018). The blind mind: No sensory visual imagery in aphantasia. *Cortex: A Journal Devoted to the Study of the Nervous System and Behavior*, 105, 53-60. DOI:10.1016/j.cortex.2017.10.012; Zeman, A., Dewar, M., & Della Sala, S. (2015). Lives without imagery - Congenital aphantasia. *Cortex: A Journal Devoted to the Study of the Nervous System & Behavior*, 73, 378–380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2015.05.019>; de Vito, S., & Bartolomeo, P. (2016). Refusing to imagine? On the possibility of psychogenic aphantasia A commentary on Zeman et al



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3 Bainbridge, W.A., Pounder, Z. Eardley, A.F., & Baker, C.I. (2021). Quantifying aphantasia through drawing: Those without visual imagery show deficits in object but not spatial memory. *Cortex: A Journal Devoted to the Study of the Nervous System & Behavior*, 135, 159-172.

4 Zeman, A. Z., Della Sala, S., Torrens, L. A., Gountouna, V. E., McGonigle, D. J., & Logie, R. H. (2010). Loss of imagery phenomenology with intact visuo-spatial task performance: a case of ‘blind imagination’. *Neuropsychologia*, 48(1), 145–155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2009.08.024>.

5 Bainbridge, W.A., et al.

Dr. Brian Sturm is an Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. His focus is on storytelling, folklore, children’s and young adults’ literature, public library services, children and technology, and bibliotherapy. You may contact him at: strum@ils.unc.edu

Watch John Golden telling a fishing story: *The Squirrel and the Bass*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Em0QjoLZgkk>

New CD Salutes Ocracoke’s Cowboy Heritage

The song features Martin Garrish as the first singer and the late John Golden as the cowboy.

<https://ocracokeobserver.com/2021/01/17/new-cd-salutes-ocracokes-cowboy-heritage/>

John Golden Folksinger/Storyteller

<https://youtu.be/0aWK3JbL4Hs?fbclid=IwAR08iVHVifsU35T5JDFC6aSk5-idmwuvdL7aV91va8gUtWzPCBIVjuPCr2M>

TRIBUTE TO JOHN GOLDEN

Born March 22, 2041 – Died January 29, 2021

“John Golden was one of the good ‘uns. Talented, generous with his time. Supportive of other artists and musicians. Not only was his name Golden but he had a deep golden voice which I for one will miss hearing. A Singer and storyteller, keeper and relay of folk history and traditions, especially of the Cape Fear region. He left a huge mark on the Wilmington area. He will be greatly missed.” - *Ray Mendenhall*

“John Golden, a fine teller, an artist, historian and a true gentleman. We met when he awarded one of my short stories about historic Wilmington with one of his prints of the city.” - *Joan Leotta*

“John Golden was a troubadour, a gentleman, and a friend to all.” - *Terry Rollins*

“John Golden was a man of many talents, serving the Wilmington community and surrounding coastal area. He played an important role in music and the storytelling community and was a former NCSG Board member. John’s story behind the sea island song, *Michael Row the Boat Ashore*, was one of my favorites. A few summers ago, I saw John at the Ocracoke Music and Storytelling Festival on Ocracoke Island. He was emcee, musician, and participant in the Sunday Gospel Sing. I’m pleased I had an opportunity to visit with him during that weekend.” - *Sylvia Payne*

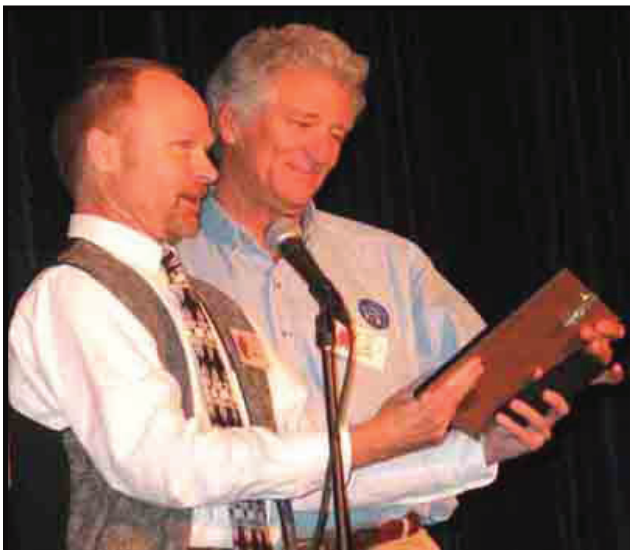


“John was such an elegant old world, charming friend. We met decades ago at the coast of course. Every time we’d be together at festivals or gatherings, John was so comfortable like family. Very humble and unassuming, John was a man of many talents. My favorites were his stories and songs about his beloved sea tales and shanties. He was instrumental in helping us start the NC Storytelling Guild. He used to rarely miss Winter Workshop where he taught us to make and love Low Country Shrimp Boil. What a dear person.” *Cynthia Brown*

“John Golden and I met via a phone chat, several years ago. As the NCSG coastal representative, I contacted the storytellers in my area, in an effort to raise funds for prizes for our storytelling festival, thus my chance to meet an admired teller. During our call, he took the time to inquire about events of our Guild, had hoped to become more involved in future activities. He apologized for his busy schedule, expressed appreciation for my call, and made a wonderful contribution toward our NCSG Storytelling Festival in Mt. Airy. I picked up John’s donation at The Golden Gallery gift shop, in Wilmington. There, I met his wife, Mary Ellen, a warm friendly person, who spoke of her husband’s busy on-going activities.” - *Marva Moss*

From the NCSG’s Archives **John Golden Receives Award**

November 22, 2003 – During the Guild’s Fall Festival in Burlington, NC, the past president, Terry Rollins announced and presented NCSG’s first Storyteller of Excellence Award to a very surprised, John Golden. John was recognized for having made a significant contribution to the art of storytelling and effectively advancing storytelling in North Carolina. Terry presented John with a framed certificate and a handsome hand-crafted wood pen and pencil set. - *From the Journal of Tar Heel Tellers, December 2003*



Terry Rollins presents the Storyteller of Excellence Award to a very surprised John Golden in November 2003, at the Guild’s Storytelling Festival in Burlington, NC.



MAGIC BEANS by JANEL BEHM

Originally published in the Florida Storytelling Association (FSA) newsletter.

I admit it.
I can't hide it any longer.

I have a secret identity.

You may know me as a barefooted storyteller with a passion for tales

rooted in myth and ancient magic, but long before I became a story artist I was and still am...an entrepreneur.

Over the years, my husband Dennis and I have created, bought and sold several businesses. I don't pretend to be a marketing expert or advertising guru, but over the years I've acquired several "magic beans" of self-promotion that have served me well in my adventure as a storyteller. My "beans" have helped me cultivate opportunities and create gigs at a magical pace with minimal effort.

Five of my favorite magical self-promotion beans:

Magic Bean #1 – Truly tell who you truly are.

Promoting yourself as an artist isn't selfish or egotistical, it's actually quite generous. When you tell others what you have to offer, you give them the opportunity to share in the gifts you have been given. Don't pretend to be something you're not, and don't pretend that what you have to share isn't of value.

Magic Bean #2 – Do what you do, NOT what you think you can sell.

One of our favorite businesses is a concession stand where we sell funnel cakes at fairs and festivals. We don't sell pizza, cotton candy, or barbeque, which are also very popular. We sell funnel cakes and we sell a lot of them because they're the best funnel cakes you've ever tasted. Similarly, I tell ancient myths and wisdom tales. Humorous personal narrative and five-minute moth stories are hugely popular right now, but that's not what I feel called to do. Honing in on your niche doesn't make you unappealing to the masses, it makes YOU irresistible to YOUR target market.

Magic Bean #3 – Separate your personal prejudice from your professional goals.

Personally, I have a love/hate relationship with technology which means I love to hate all things digital.

Don't even talk to me about Facebook, it makes my tummy hurt. Professionally, I understand that social media is the most effective way to reach my target market and follow trends in the storytelling world. I've learned to set my personal aversion aside so that I can professionally reach my tribe.

Magic Bean #4 – Find the social media sweet spot.

It's not about how many friends you have on Facebook, it's about how many of those friends follow you. Post too frequently and you become white noise that no one really hears. Post too little and people forget who you are, and your message never gathers momentum. Craft your posts like you craft your stories...interesting, informative, and entertaining.



Magic Bean #5 – Find a "Media Magician"

The smartest thing I ever did was engage someone to help me with my social media, website, and promotions. My "media magician" spends hours helping me create



Facebook posts, adjusting photos, and crafting text that will keep my style consistent across all platforms and in alignment with who I am as a teller. She manages areas of self-promotion that I don't enjoy which frees me up to

do what I LOVE – walking with Story, researching and practicing.

Now, you might be wondering how to find your own media magician and my answer is rather simple: Decide that there's a place on your team for such a sorcerer and then don't stop looking until you find one!

Finally, remember that no one can listen to your stories if you don't tell them you have something special to share.

May these beans help you grow your self-promotion and share the magic of YOU and YOUR stories.

Janel Behm draws upon her love of theater, music, and nature to create a unique story experience for her audience. She specializes in ancient allegories from original cultures. We are happy to claim Janel as a recent member of NCSG. You may contact her at: BehmStorytelling@gmail.com



FANCIFUL COLLAGE CARDS BY CONNIE REGAN-BLAKE

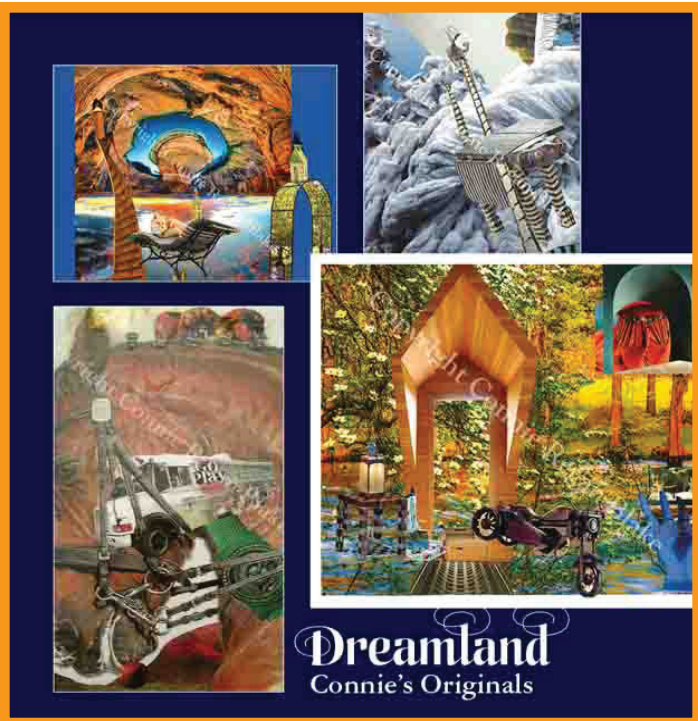
In addition to my storytelling, teaching and coaching, I have always been drawn to making collages. Often though, I would go years in between creating them! It wasn't until about five years ago. I joined with three dear friends who are all artists and we meet on a regular basis developing an encouraging environment for us each to create in our own way. Here is my process: I cut-out images from magazines, calendars, and photos and put them together in unique ways to tell a different kind of a visual story.

Then my husband, Phil put a number of my favorite collages into a beautiful hardbound book for me as a surprise birthday gift. When friends saw that beautiful book (back when we could visit in person,) I got such wonderful feedback from folks saying "I would love to buy a print of this one or that one!" Once that happened a number of times, I decided I would make



blank greeting cards out of them and one thing led to another and now I have them available for sale on my website. I hope you'll take a look - <https://storywindow.com/product-category/collages/>. And in case you might be drawn to them, here's a 'two for one coupon code' just for NCSG members: BOGOFancifulCards - I would appreciate any help in spreading the word to family and friends who might enjoy these "wordless stories." I might mention too that my collage sisters and I switched to Zoom a year ago - and have found new, surprisingly intimate and supportive ways to flow virtually online as we individually create our collages.

Connie Regan-Blake is a respected storytelling workshop leader in Asheville and around the globe. Praised by national media, Connie has been honored with prestigious "Circle of Excellence" and "Lifetime Achievement" Awards. She may be contacted at: Connie@storywindow.com. Go to her website: StoryWindow.com



What's Happening With Larry Pearlman

I have been having a good time participating in a monthly story slam from Florida. Here are the details:
The Boca Raton Public Library Story Central Storytelling Slam
Virtual event
Facebook page: Story Central Virtual Storytelling Slam

Second Sunday each month 5-6:30
Caren Neile: cneile@fau.edu
Must be a story, not a poem or a rant, 5-7 minutes. No notes - not memorized - more like sitting around your living room telling a story. \$50 for 1st place judged by 3 anonymous judges. Fun event.

DO NOT RING DOORBELL

What I learned From Zoom by Linda Gorham



For years to ‘zoom’ meant to speed, to scurry and even to streak. But since 2020 zoom has a capital Z, and with it, a whole new meaning. Just as we now Google, we Zoom. We Zoom to visit with family and friends. We Zoom to attend weddings and funerals. (Are birthing Zooms next?) We Zoom to keep in touch with our storytelling community. We Zoom for survival. We Zoom so we can address the big question, “How can I keep my storytelling business alive during this Covid world?”

My first thought was to wait it out. Surely this virus can’t change our lives for long, right? My answer to going virtual for many months was simple, “Thanks for asking, but I’m just not ready yet.” And then a bunch of phone calls came in – mostly from adult librarians in the Chicago area (thank goodness for old friends!).

“We know you won’t come up here during the winter (with the snow, ice and all), but since we have Zoom, will you do some virtual historical performances for us?”

“No!” I said as I broke out in hives. “I’m not ready! I don’t have the equipment! I don’t have the right space! How will I pull together stories that incorporate the music and the PowerPoints I usually use? I’m not sure I know how to do it all!”

“Pleeeeeeease!”

“Hmpt! Okay, I’ll do it!”

You know that feeling when you hang up the phone after taking a show and say, “Oh snap! Do I have the right stories? Do I have enough time to prepare? And then these days ... the big questions ... “Am I ready to record on video? Am I ready to Zoom live?”

It was a challenge, but since I had a bunch of signed contracts in hand, enough to pay for my expenses, I got busy:

- I rearranged my office and straightened up my bookshelf.
- I turned a spare bedroom into a makeshift

performance space – complete with a mattress against

the wall to add soundproofing. (I had to put it somewhere!)

- I hung a curtain rod behind my desk and tried out four separate backdrops on my wall (two large pieces of fabric from JoAnn Fabrics ... two from Amazon – I kept the [two](#) from Amazon.)
- I experimented with many light solutions until I finally purchased a set of professional floor [lights](#). I can now be officially ‘lit up!’
- I put pillows all around my computer to muffle the echoes and avoid tininess in my microphone.
- I purchased not one, not two, not three, but four computer cameras. The first one was crappy, the second didn’t have a high enough resolution, the third stopped working unexplainably. The good news is I was able to exchange the third one for credit toward camera number [four](#).
- I put a [box](#) (sometimes two) under my computer so my eyes will look directly into the teeny, tiny camera hole. I plan to buy a fancy [stand](#) soon for both sitting and standing performances

That’s not all:

- I had AT&T come out to evaluate my Internet speed. Yes, it is hard as heck to get an AT&T technician to come to your home these days. And yes, some rooms were ‘deader’ than others. For the dead space I purchased a [Google WiFi](#) system.
- I grabbed a ‘Do Not Ring Doorbell’ sign off Google images to hang on my front door during recordings.
- I called my neighbors, “I’m going to record. Can you refrain from mowing your lawn or using your leaf blower for the next two (three, four or five) hours? And keep your barky dog quiet ... please!”

What have I learned? All these things matter when it comes to virtual performing. If folks see a cluttered

Continued from previous page.

bookcase behind my head ... they may spend more time trying to arrange my books rather than hear my stories. If they see my ceiling fan ... they may spot the dust. And if they see my nose hairs ... they may (horribly) try to count them. And as for me, if my neighbors ring my doorbell during a taping, or mow their lawn, or let their yappy dogs out ... well I may poison their flower beds.

Mind you these are not distractions we faced during live performances (especially the nose hairs thing). Honestly, I didn't expect the 'virtual world of performing' learning

curve to be so huge, but like most I am surviving. I hope you are too. In fact, next time you Zoom with me, I may invite you to share a margarita in my new relaxing computer-generated virtual backdrop. Aaaaaah!

Linda's performances are filled with surprising twists and unconventional humor. She was awarded the Distinguished National Service Award by the National Storytelling Network in 2016. She was also one of NCSG performers during our 2019 Cary Festival. You may contact her at:

Lgorham3@gmail.com or www.LindaGorham.com



Happy Zooming everyone! This too will pass!

[Info about Linda's past virtual shows:](#)

Linda Gorham was featured at the virtual [Florida Storytelling Festival](#) on January 28-31. On April 23 and 24 she was featured at the [Connecticut Storytelling Festival](#).



What's Happening With Chuck Fink

The main thing I've been involved with is a radio show I host on WPVM-FM 10.7 in Asheville. The show, Storyville, airs every Wednesday at 10:00. (a side note ---Our small reach gets greatly expanded because of technology we use to enhance our online presence.) So, the name of the event: Storyville

The show airs every Wednesday on WPVM-FM Asheville 103.7. Episodes are posted on Facebook at WPVM and Chuck Fink Storyteller at Chuck Fink Storyteller,

YouTube on both WPVM-FM, and Chuck Fink Storyteller link is <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLn6ZjAXpQI-Zo4Q8NcksEwXeQI5-ATwy>, On the stations blog site <https://wpvmfm.org/?s=blogs>, and on my website chuckfinkstoryteller.com.

Guests include Donna Marie Todd, Ray Christian, Larry Pearlman, Michale Reno Harrell, Gwenda Ledbetter, Sherry Lovett, David Holt and more. The current episode features me as the guest and my wife as the guest host. Friends have been advising me to do so, and I finally took the plunge.

I'm having so much fun and giving exposure to some wonderful tellers and just plain good folks.

Storyville WPVMfm 103.7 Asheville

Website: chuckfinkstoryteller.com

Youtube: Chuck Fink Storyteller

Facebook: Chuck Fink Storyteller

Email: charlesfink1@gmail.com

What's Happening With Donna Washington

For twenty years, Donna Washington dreamed of helping performing artists who run their own businesses. After the global pandemic began in early 2020, artists who perform live in front of audiences found themselves stuck, struggling financially. That's when Donna began to converse with Sheila Arnold of Virginia. After meeting with others at The Women's Festival last year these conversations grew. Their "first order of business was to establish a fund to help struggling storytellers. The National Storytelling Network agreed to administer the fund."

After much brainstorming, discussions and hard work they have a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit organization. Donna was appointed as President.

This organization is: **Artists Standing Strong Together – ASST** (pronounced as Assist). There are weekly meetings, on Mondays at 4pm EDT. Includes Discussions, Educational, and Informative topics. Don't miss the detailed History and Performance events!

<https://www.artistsstandingstrongtogether.net>

Donna's Contact: www.dlwstoryteller.com

Thank You from a Southern U.S. Navy Sailor by J.A. Bolton, Storyteller

As a writer, you sometimes think, “Is all this time and research on a book or column worth it?” An average writer or author makes very little money, especially when he or she counts the time and effort to get something published.

It is so nice when someone tells you that they enjoyed reading your work, how they can relate to your stories, or how it helped them through their day or stressful nights.

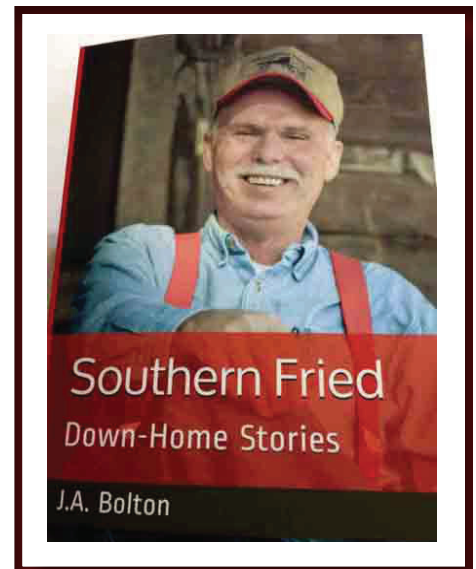
The following is an e-mail I received several weeks ago from an American sailor aboard the USS Ronald Reagan somewhere in the Pacific:

Dear Mr. Bolton,

My name is Peggy Kennedy, and I am a proud North Carolinian, born and raised in Ellerbe, and am currently serving on a Navy ship, the USS Ronald Reagan. I am at sea right now as I write this to you. We are not able to go to any ports, so all my shipmates and I are kinda stuck and feeling really low in spirits. I recently read your book, *Just Passing Time*, and it made me laugh and cry at the same time. Words cannot express how much it meant to me to read your book and remember my hometown and all my own experiences. I squealed like all get

out when I started seeing names of towns and places from your book! My co-workers looked at me like my screws were loose but I didn’t care. I was so happy. I used to go to Pee Dee River all the time with my Mama, picnicking and walking. I learned to drive out there! I went to church in Ellerbe and drove to Rockingham all the time, where my grandma lived. We got stuck in Sandhills Gameland one time, a friend and I were learning to drive in the thick sand (my friend got us stuck). I have had some bad memories from Ellerbe, but I do have a lot of wonderful memories with my mother there, and you brought back every single one. I cannot even begin to thank you for that. I especially loved the part in your book about the mother and the carpenter during the war; that put me to tears. My Mama taught me to fear God and respect our service men and women; I guess that’s part of why I joined in the first place. That, and I felt that was what God wanted me to do at that time.

I tell you, Japan is awesome, when we are there and able to explore, but absolutely nothing beats home. I live in Oklahoma now, when I’m not in the middle of the South Pacific, but I will never forget where I come from. Ellerbe, North Carolina will always be home to me in my heart.



Thank you again for the morale-booster; your book and stories of home mean the world to me. God bless, and please keep the writing comin’!

Very Respectfully

RS3 (SW) Peggyann Kennedy

USS Ronald Reagan

This e-mail from this young sailor brought a tear to my cheek and at the same time blessed my heart. We in America are so blessed to have people like this young lady serving in our armed forces to protect us and our homeland.

If I sold a thousand books or wrote hundreds of columns, none would be more gratifying than this e-mail I received from this young sailor.

J.A. Bolton is author of “Just Passing Time,” co-author of “Just Passing Time Together,” and just released a new book “Southern Fried: Down-Home Stories.” You may contact him at ja@jabolton.com.

EDUCATIONAL CALENDAR SITES

[Library of Congress Event Calendar](#)

[National Endowment of the Humanities Events Calendar](#)

[National Gallery of Art Events Calendar](#)

[National Park Service Events Calendar](#)

[Smithsonian Institution Event Calendar](#)

[United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

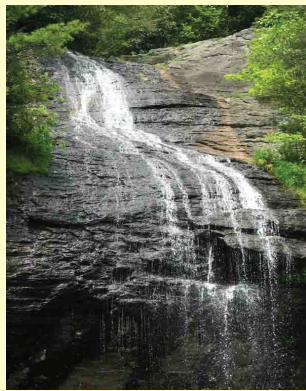
What's on Your Bucket List?

by Marva Moss

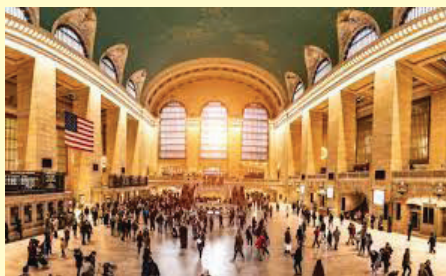
Most of us have bucket lists. I heard the term - bucket list, many years ago, on the Oprah Winfree show. "What a great idea", I thought, "a chance to list my dreams, and set goals to make them a reality". Thus, the beginning of my list of future adventures. Allow me to share a few items on my Bucket List.

In the early part of winter, many years ago, my family and I traveled from Washington, D.C., to East Prairie, Missouri. Our four-year-old daughter was going to visit her paternal grandparents. Somewhere along those many miles between the two cities, we stopped at a waterfall.

I have no words for the beauty of that experience! It was my first, real life, up-close waterfall! There's nothing like the surrounding sights, and sounds of falling water. A gentle breeze left a cool mist on my face. It was the perfect time and place for a stop. In today's hurried world, waterfalls provide a few minutes of needed relaxation, and moments to be reminded about the joys of life. Our State Magazine, and the North Carolina Travel Guide, states that there are eleven or more top rated waterfalls in the state. Therefore, visiting a waterfall, or two, in North (or South) Carolina, is on my bucket list.



In my Bucket List of dreams, I imagine an evening view from the windows of the train, allowing me to see snow covered grounds, shrubs and trees, on my way to New York! Homes wear wintry coverings. Yards and lawns are decked in colorful lights, shapes, and designs to create beautiful holiday settings.



Upon arriving at the Grand Central Station (Terminal), I will quickly change into my holiday clothing - an all-white outfit from the top of my head to the bottom of my boots. That outfit will carry the statement of

readiness for the Rockefeller Center! Year after year, via television, wonderful holiday celebrations take place there, especially fun times at the skating rink! That scene is an invitation to fun and excitement! The lighting of the Christmas tree, decorations of all imaginations, music, and wonderful entertainment activities - 'who could ask for anything more' on a winter's evening, surrounded by the beauty of such a colorful setting! As for skating - no thank you, I simply wish to be a part of the magic of the moment, ... at Rockefeller Center! You guessed it, a trip to Rockefeller Center is very much a part of my bucket list!

At the Sarah P. Duke Gardens, one can only imagine the beauty of the landscapes - rolling lawns, pathways, and trails. Flowers and plants by names never to be remembered, or their fragrances never to be forgotten, will be the highlight of the season - late spring or late fall!



In past years, the idea of visiting the Gardens surfaced often, this year will be different, especially, after a year of isolation due to a world-wide virus. I truly think the 55-acre site, located in Durham, NC, may be the best place to set my bucket list in motion - this spring or summer, 2021!

My bucket list has many more items - visits to the Western Museum of Cowboys, the new African American History and Cultural Museum, the school sites of Mary McCloud Bethune, Dr. George Washington Carver, and Booker T. Washington, and, another trip to New York, this time to see a Broadway show. These bucket list items will certainly require much attention to travel plans - whether by land, or by air. The opportunity to visit these sites, will be well worth my in-person experience, for a lifetime.



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 gardening and taking piano lessons. She may be contacted at: owlcottage@atmc.net.

Virtually Possible By Terry Rollins



Two years ago, I was having a conversation with my friend Dianne Hackworth about the connection between modern technology and storytelling. We both agreed that there was so much potential out there for us to reach new audiences by taking our storytelling into the virtual world, but we didn't know how to go about it.

And then a pandemic came along.

In addition to being a professional storyteller, I am a youth services librarian in a small eastern North Carolina town. I was about to learn fast and furiously how to navigate the waters of virtual programming. What had seemed nearly impossible for me to undertake was about to become very possible!

The library where I work closed to the public at the end of the day on March 13, 2020. At that time, my co-workers and I imagined that we'd probably re-open within a few weeks, a month at the longest. We never dreamed that a year later, we would still not be open for customers to come into our facility. After two weeks of our library being closed to the public, my director came to me and the head of technical services to discuss our taking as much of our programming as possible onto the library's Facebook page. Our arsenal for battle? An iPhone, a tabletop tripod, and a wealth of children's books.

Those first recordings were frightful! We'd record and I'd flub up a sentence. We'd retake it. We'd record an entire story only to find out by playing it back that the sound or lighting was too low, or the pages of the picture book were not clearly visible. Retake again. And again. And still again.

Slowly we got better at it. Slowly I became more and more comfortable with virtual story time. By summer, we were branching out into storytelling. We recorded me sharing, "Tailypo", by 'campfire'. We recorded me

telling, "Blackbeard the Pirate". Arr! We recorded craft time, singalongs, and lots of storybook readings. It became, dare I say, FUN! And our library customers responded accordingly. Our Facebook page started having more and more viewers, with lots of positive feedback. Our small-town newspaper did an article about us, and even more people began following our weekly story times. By autumn, we had seen an increase of traffic on our Facebook page of over 75% from the year before. Many of our virtual story times and special events now saw over 1000 viewers tuning in! "Mister Terry" was becoming a local "star". LOL

There is still so much more to be explored, such as podcasts, blogs, Tik Tok, and so forth. I have an amazing group of co-workers who are happy doing the recording, the editing, and posting. They are happy to make "Mister Terry" shine a little, just as long as they don't have to be in front of the camera.

So, as Dianne and I knew, there is so much potential for sharing stories, and reaching new audiences on the Internet. One day the pandemic will be over and our library will again have patrons browsing our shelves and children attending in-person story times. But we also know that we will continue offering virtual programming. It's part of this new world that we were thrown into. The impossible is possible, and I'm very happy to be part of it.

Terry Rollins is a co-founder of the NC Storytelling Guild, and the Youth Services Librarian at the George H. & Laura E. Brown Library in Washington, NC. Visit his weekly story times at: <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgeHLauraEBrownLibrary>.

Do You Remember:

When the NCSG Produced a 20th Anniversary Book, filled with Guild History?

If you missed ordering this book or missed viewing it, here's the website:

https://www.bookemon.com/book_read_flip.php?book_id=824921&check=3796e94dbf830f1c28529ead5b0a6f8d#book/3

Making Stories Grow - Spring is in the Air - by Kanute Rarey



The pandemic of 2020 led to a lot of creative thinking. Everyone reacted to not being able to gather together to tell stories in the same room, same tent, or the same closed in space. That has led to a lot of wonderful new Zoom events that would have never existed without so many gathering constraints.

Today there is a big push to “get outside and play”. Everyone has been cooped up for the last year and we all hope that the worst is behind us. That has led to our next regional storytelling “adventure” in my hometown of Hayesville, North Carolina. Our local group, Mountain Area Storytellers, asked ourselves “how can we get in front of a live audience again in this slowly developing landscape of recovery”.

After watching years of arts and crafts shows and musical groups performing on our local gazebo stage on the town's Courthouse Square a new thought came to mind. The answer was an outdoor event. We could add



a new event to our regularly planned monthly open mic storytelling and we could take it from the coffee shop to the court-

house. We could bring the other storytellers, writers, poet, and seeker songwriters together and perform outside in the gazebo on the courthouse Square on Friday night. Mmmmm! Maybe that could work!

Next, we spread the story. Our vision became a story “painting pictures in words” we shared with others. After bouncing the idea off several area organizations, all of whom were supportive, our idea was embraced by our wonderful new community partner, the Clay County Community Revitalization Association. A group built around making our home town a center of thriving business and of joyful events. A place here in western North Carolina where folks can come by and sit around and visit for a spell or come and spend a lifetime.

Now we have a plan. The outdoor event happening three times this year is our new series: FRESH AIR - Stories on the Square.

Ten courageous performers, ten eight-minute slots, a sound system, a big, grassy lawn, a covered gazebo and committed co-sponsor and we are in business. We kicked it off Friday, April 23rd. Everyone was invited to come on out and visit and enjoy an evening of fun! Folks brought folding chairs and arrived with picnic baskets and joined the fun. Check us out in the schedule of other dates included in this newsletter.

Storytelling Events for next quarter include:

- 1) **TELL IT LIKE IT IS Story Swap**
- 2) **Virtual via Zoom**
- 3) **Website: www.kanuterarey.com**
- 4) **Date and Time: Each Thursday at 2:00pm EDT**
- 5) **Contact: Kanute Rarey – 502.525.7272
kanutetells@gmail.com**

- 1) **OPEN MIC Night - Stories on the Square**
- 2) **Virtual via Zoom**
- 3) **Website: www.kanuterarey.com**
- 4) **Dates & Time: April 16, May 21, June 18, 6:00pm EDT**
- 5) **Contact: Kanute Rarey – 502.525.7272
kanutetells@gmail.com**

- 1) **NEW! FRESH AIR series - Stories on the Square**
- 2) **Live on Courthouse Square in Hayesville, NC**
- 3) **Website: www.kanuterarey.com**
- 4) **Dates & Time: April 23, July 23, October 29, 6:00pm EDT**
- 5) **Contact: Kanute Rarey – 502.525.7272 or
kanutetells@gmail.com**

Kanute Rarey writes and performs his stories from his heart. That work is a product of his life experiences and imagination. Kanute finds joy as he entertains and educates through storytelling. He is a frequent contributor and may be contacted at: kanutetells@gmail.com.

*What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.
– Jane Goodall*

THE UPSIDE OF ZOOM BY JOAN LEOTTA

Zoom has become a cliché, but for me it has opened up new worlds. Living in the far Southeast corner of NC, it is hard for me to travel to conferences, meetings, etc. In addition to seeing family, I've been able to connect with friends around the country and the world in story and poetry in particular. One of the most fun things I've done in the pandemic is tell stories in Europe—Italy to be specific. I was invited to join an Italian story group on January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, and the end of the holidays, with a story about food, holiday food in particular. I chose to read a poem of my own in English, after explaining in Italian the history of the recipe in my family as a holiday item. Although I did explain all of that in Italian on the radio, when they asked me to write it down, I used English, as I have here, because my spelling and control of the subjunctive in Italian have diminished shamefully over the years.

Each of Italy's twenty regions has its own distinctive cuisine and from these regions several cookies and treats have become iconic "Italian" here in America. One of these is the pizzelle. (Actually, plural in Italian) My mother was from a background that was part Calabrian and Neapolitan, but one of her favorite cookies was the pizzelle and she wanted to learn to make them. My father's family was Abruzzese, so finding a recipe was easy. Since our part of Pennsylvania was full of Italians, buying a pizzelle iron was easy. In fact, a local company, Palmer, made some of the best.

This is an easy cookie to make—if you have watched someone make it. It is very time consuming since

each one is made on an iron. It was even more trouble before the electric pizzelle iron. I remember my mother making them over the gas stove, one at a time—from a recipe that yields almost five dozen. By the time I was in high school, she was using the electric iron which made two at a time. She made them at Christmas and at Easter. Some years only at Christmas.

When I got married, she wrote out her recipe for me and set aside a day to show me how to make the pizzelle. "The trick to good pizzelle, thin and crisp," she said, "is in knowing how much flour to add to the dough. It varies by how much humidity there is in the air that day, so you need to 'feel' the amount." So, we made them together one afternoon. I've passed the recipe and the "feel" for the dough on to my own daughter now.

Here is the poem I read. The recipe follows.

ON MAKING THE PIZZELLE

"Please write your recipe for *pizzelle*,"

I demanded one winter afternoon,
"They are my favorite cookie."

"They are a lot of work,"
she warned reaching
for her red pen and an index card.

She wrote for a minute.
Then stopped.
"Words are not enough.
You need to learn to feel
when the dough
has just enough flour."

That very afternoon, together,
we measured, stirred
and measured again,
matching the day's humidity
with the correct amount of flour.
After her spoon declared

the mix "correct," she watched me
bring the spoon round and round
the bowl until I could too "feel"
the dough's message—"I am thick
enough."

We oiled her special press,
laughed, as I burned the first few,
efforts. Two hours later we
proudly set a plate of
finely finished, fresh
specimens before my father and
husband.

Only then, Mom wrote out the
recipe.

Next, she took me to buy a *pizzelle*
iron

from the man who sold one to her.

Twenty years later,
I trace the swirls of my mother's
orthography
feeling her love
in each loop of ink,
on the yellowing three by five card.
Mom lives only in my heart,
but annually,

I revive her love as I
measure, stir, and press out
crisp light
anise flavored
stacks of pizzelle.



Yesterday, my daughter asked
me to email the recipe to her.

I sent a plane ticket instead.

"Mere words,
won't work," I explained.

"*Pizzelle* making,
reveals its secrets only if
we work side by side.
Besides, I will need to
Take you shopping, to
buy you a *pizzelle* iron
from the son of the man
who sold mine to me."

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

Good Stories Are Many-Splendored Things

by Ray W. Mendenhall, the Jolly Man

I have had a chance to listen to a variety of storytellers during this pandemic. Zoom and virtual gatherings have broadened the horizons of storytelling and story listening. Listening to tellers of different experience levels has brought into focus a number of thoughts about what makes for a good story or what makes a story good.

A good story isn't just a bunch of different pieces put together, it is woven. It is a single and seamless piece where each "thread" of the story is connected and supports the whole. Storytellers just starting out tend to follow the idea that if you just connect a bunch of good ideas together, you have a good story, but the truth is that a good story is crafted, constructed like a piece of art where each component part contributes to the whole. A good story is a lot like plowing a straight row. You pick the ground to plow. You find a place to start, then you plow straight across while keeping your eye on where you are going and where you want to end up.

Another feature of a good story is what I call the economy of words. Beginning storytellers often think that the more words and detail you use the better the story. In other words, they tend to load up a story with a lot of extraneous and sometimes irrelevant stuff. Too much material and an overuse of detail just load the story down. It clutters up the flow, the progress, and the focus of the story and often overwhelms and confuses the listener. My philosophy

is why use a lot of words when a few well chosen, well crafted, well placed words and integrated detail moves the story along and keeps it on point. Less is more as the saying goes. A story shouldn't seem like a hurdle race but rather a smooth and pleasant jaunt.

Another important aspect of good storytelling is what I call ebb and flow. I recently heard a storyteller who told a story with great intensity throughout. It felt like he was shouting at the listeners. At the end I felt overwhelmed and beat up. The relentless intensity distracted from what could have been a great story. Human speech seldom proceeds at a constant level or pace. It rises and falls for emphasis and for nuance. The storyteller's speech should do the same. Stories need vocal rhythm, the rise and fall of words and phrases, both the emphatic as well as the understated. Variety is the spice of life and of a good story. Think of story as an intimate conversation with your listeners.

I once heard a prominent preaching professor say that transitions were the most important part of a good sermon. The same is true of a good story. Carefully constructed transitions help the story move forward and flow. Good transitions connect what comes before to what comes after in a way that takes the listener with you. Poor transitions can lose and confuse the listener and "put them off the scent" so to speak.

One of my persistent themes when talking about storytelling is



the prudent use of detail. Novice storytellers tend to use too much and unnecessary detail. Detail is not the story but an element of the story. It's helpful to think of detail as seasoning. It's not the main dish, but it adds spice and spark. Too much detail tends to stall the story and overpower it. The economic use of detail adds to the story and gives it depth. As much as possible, I like to weave the detail into the narrative. One of my Jack Tales begins like this: "Jack!" "Yes, Mama." "What chu' doin'?" "Feedin' the chicken".... They was so poor they only had one... With just those few words, I have told you a lot about Jack and his mama and introduced a large part of the tension that drives the story.

This is not in the least an exhaustive list of elements to enhance good storytelling, but it is food for thought as we practice our art and strive to become more effective storytellers.

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

Storytelling World 2021 Awards

www.storytellingworld.com

Congratulations to two amazing Storytellers who recently won the following awards.

Donna Marie Todd,

President of the Asheville Storytelling Circle, received a Storytelling World Award in the **Storytelling Recordings** category for her DVD, **“The Sheep-Shearing Beautician and Other Festival Stories.”**

Original personal stories

www.donnamarietodd.com



Donna Washington,

President of Artists Standing Strong Together, received a Storytelling World Award for **Storytelling Recordings** category for her CD, **“Walking with Ancient Wisdom”**

Four stories from around the world

DLW Storyteller, www.dlwstoryteller.com



Donna Washington, also received a Storytelling World Award for **Stories for Adult Listeners** category for her CD, **“Chairs in the Trees”**

A powerful description of prejudice

DLW Storyteller, www.dlwstoryteller.com



Storytelling Events

The **Asheville Storytelling Circle** meets on the 3rd Monday of Every month at 7:00. During the COVID-19 pandemic we are meeting via **Zoom**. We use the same meeting ID and password for every meeting. Everyone is invited.

We do ask that you inform Charlie St. Clair, our Zoom host, if you plan to attend and if you would like to tell a story, and for how long. Visitors are welcome to tell if there is time. We ask that you limit your story to 10 minutes.

You may contact Donna Marie Todd:
donnamarie@donnamarietodd.com

Bynum Front Porch presents Live Storytelling Show

Second Saturday each Month at 7pm

<http://facebook.com/bynumfrontporch>

Host Cynthia Raxter will feature Storytellers: Sheila Arnold, Lona Bartlett, Robin Kitson, Krista Westervelt and Kiernan Reed, on May 8th.

You may also watch the previously recorded shows. They are there for your enjoyment –

<https://www.facebook.com/bynumfrontporch/videos/>

Or contact: Cynthia Raxter at:

<http://Facebook.Com/CynthiaRaxter>

Additional Events

Open Mic Night - See Page 19 for Kanute Rarey's Schedule

Tell It Like It Is - See Page 19 for Kanute's Schedule

New! Fresh Air series - See Page 19 for Kanute's Schedule

Sounds of the Mountains Festival - go to NCSG's Events page - this festival runs through **June 19:**
<https://ncstoryguild.org/event>

You will find many additional events by searching the Guild Events page above. Most are on ZOOM.

Accepting JTHT Articles

Articles, stories, and storytelling news are needed for NCSG's Fall 2021 issue of the *Journal of Tar Heel Tellers*.

We ask that you include events that you are aware of (*open to the public*). They will be posted on NCSG's website 'Events' page at <http://www.ncstoryguild.org/events.html>.

Allow a couple weeks notice for your event to get posted on NCSG's website 'Events' page.

Deadline: September 15, 2021
Send to: sylpayne@bellsouth.net.