



*The Whole Gang*

My phone rang on Tuesday morning. The holistic medical group from Atlanta rejected my bid for their team-building retreat in Highlands. I was both disappointed and excited. Disappointed at the missed revenue. Excited to accept the scholarship offer to attend this year's North Carolina Storytelling Guild Winter Workshop.

Donna Washington was scheduled to teach *Taming the Wild Personal Narrative*. I suspect she knew, too, she'd be taming a wild bunch of storytellers. Nearly twenty percent of members on the rolls of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild showed up for Donna and one another on that third weekend of January. People traveled from across the state and beyond: from South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, and even from distant and foreign lands like Connecticut and New Hampshire.

## WINTER WORKSHOP 2023 by GREG Whitt *Taming the Wild Personal Narrative*

It was my first time at this workshop, in fact, at ANY storytelling workshop. I'm relatively new to the craft and felt like a little lost lamb among the many old friends and old hands who turned up at Fort Caswell.

Yet Caswell felt like a homecoming for me, too. I spent eight years with the Air Force and a good bit of that on old Army posts like this one. The 43 stairs up to my third-floor abode gave me ample time to relish the memories. The gate shack, landscape, buildings, battlements, and even the honeycombed black-and-white bathroom tile were all familiar faces from my time in uniform nearly thirty years ago.

This was the 22nd convening of the Winter Workshop. Dianne Hackworth planned and executed the gathering as if she'd attended every one of them, which in fact, she had! Many in attendance were regulars, with more than five of these happenings to their credit. FIVE of us attended for the very first time. The greenest of us newbies relegated ourselves to a self-proclaimed "children's table" even though the youngest of us was over thirty. We sat off to the



*Donna Washington & Dianne Hackworth*



*Donna Washington*

side but at the front so we wouldn't miss a thing. We were as far as we could be from the terrible temptations of the snack table where Steve Tate's Goat Lady Dairy cheese reigned supreme.

This was a chance for me to get close to Donna in both a literal and figurative sense. I knew Donna from afar — far across the cafeteria at the annual booking fair

for teaching artists in Wake County Schools. She's a rockstar in that arena and in most where she steps foot. With her powerful personality, she's not one to tread lightly, however. In fact, we were all perhaps a bit surprised when she opened the weekend with this idea: "I've never taught this material before because I simply hate personal narratives." It took us three days to develop enough understanding about them to realize that maybe we all sometimes dislike them a bit as well.

For three days we explored what she meant. I think it boiled down to something both relatively simple and at the same time extremely complex. It's the idea that we're so attached to our own stories that we may not even understand what they're actually about. We love these stories so much that it's extra hard to kill those 'little darlings', little personal details that are only important to us and wholly irrelevant to anyone else. We love these stories so much that we can't identify our own motivations and intentions when we share them. We love these stories so much that we forget that their telling is more about the audience than ourselves! That was a very big idea indeed. Personal narratives are most powerful when listeners can identify themselves in the story. No one cares about your slice of life unless they can see themselves somewhere in that story, too.

Our personal narrative "ME" story must become a "WE" story. Donna gave us a great contrast that became a weekend-long wrestling match with our own psyche. So how do we make our idea big enough that the audience understands some universal truth about how they've felt something similar, AND how do we hone our understanding of these stories so we can pinpoint their purpose? She taught us that honing our person-

al narratives will be easier once we identify which archetypal category they resemble: quest, love story, adventure, wisdom tale, etc.

Honing turned out to be a considerable challenge. Ask 24 storytellers to summarize a story; they simply can't do it. It's in their nature to tell you the story! So, we spent hours on exercises designed to help us chunk it down to the bare essentials: a two-word description of the narrative's genre and purpose.

I'm sure you can imagine the frustration of so many wordsmiths corralled into wrapping it all up into something as simple as that tiny slip found inside a fortune cookie.

This is the very gift of the winter season. Deep listening and reflection, in this case shared with ever-changing partners, forced us to consider what we're trying to do with these personal tales. It was an opportunity to simmer and reduce, to identify what we're feeling and what we want to convey, and to trim anything we say that does not move our audience in the direction we're headed. But, of course, the very first step is to decide where that is. In other words, 'WHAT IS THIS STORY ABOUT?'

Throughout the weekend Dianne encouraged us to explore the grounds. Friday's weather was warm and clear. We young folks took a late-night walk on the beach. The rest of the weekend conspired to keep us close as winds rose and temperatures dropped. Rain poured down, insisting that we batten down the hatches on that old fort, huddled together, warm and safe and content in one another's company, with great stories and fond remembrances that filled the air, and the time, despite the best efforts of Donna and Dianne to keep things on schedule.

The pandemic kept the Guild from gathering for in-person workshops for the past two years. The energy of reemergence was exhausting for many. After the big fun of the White Elephant exchange, the parlor was nearly empty on Friday night, but the old surgery theater was packed for late-night sharing on Saturday. Sunday morning's mad dash between the raindrops



*Greg Whitt*

*Continued next page*





Left photo- L to R: Cynthia Brown, Alan Hoal, Sam Pearsall.



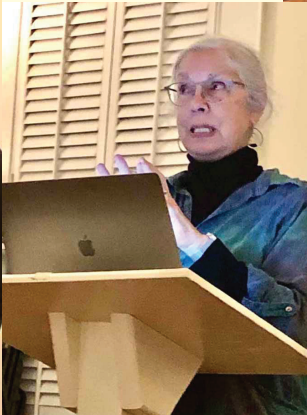
Right photo- L to R: Steve Tate & Donna Washington.



Center photos More Great Workshop Attendees!



Dianne Hackworth & Larry Pearlman



Milbre Burch



Steve Tate, Naomi Faw, Andy Russell

had everyone scrambling to get on the road. A mere half-dozen lingered for lunch at the Fishy Fishy Cafe on the way out of town. It was here that Donna told us about the formation of Artists Standing Strong Together, a non-profit born of the pandemic with a mission to provide support and connection for independent storytellers.

I say the weekend was a huge success. People were hungry for one another. They were hungry to be heard and to deepen their craft. They were hungry, too, for bacon, apparently, since it was all gobbled up before a few of us could get any at Saturday's breakfast buffet, a breakfast that featured the finest scrambled eggs ever eaten at the NCSG Winter Workshop. I should know because I scrambled many of them myself.

We all hope to see you at our TWENTY THIRD NCSG Winter Workshop. It's scheduled for January 19-21,

2024. Stay tuned for all the details on the presenter and topic.

(Photos by Greg Whitt, Dianne Hackworth, Steve Tate)

Greg Whitt has received three competitive Regional Artist Project Grants in the field of folkloric music. Greg teaches through rhythm, song, and story from around the globe. He shares folk stories and travel tales filled with life lessons that are good wisdom for modern society.

[www.drumforchange.com](http://www.drumforchange.com)



## JOURNAL OF TAR HEEL TELLERS

Editor, Sylvia Payne  
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Newton, NC 28658  
NCSG Website:  
[www.ncstoryguild.org](http://www.ncstoryguild.org)

*Journal of Tar Heel Tellers (JTHT) is the official newsletter of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild and is published biannually, Spring and Fall.*

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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: Chuck Fink, Robin Kitson, Brenda Kay Ledford, Joan Leotta, Ray Mendenhall, Marva Moss, Jim Payne, Larry Pearlman, Sam Pearsall, Mike Perry, Charles Plasters, Nancy Reeder, Greg Whitt, Donna Washington and Deborah Winkler.



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

Lona Bartlett was a featured teller on the Storytelling.org virtual Open Mic program: Traditions and Truth . . . Congratulations to **Lona Bartlett, Robin Kitson, and Donna Washington** who were among the those who performed at the March Women's Storytelling Festival directed by <https://www.better-saidthandone.com> . . . **Mike Perry** was a featured teller for the Better Said Than Done virtual presentation: Fractured: A Different Take on Traditional Tales . . .

"Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me: I want people to know 'why' I look this way. I've traveled a long way, and some of the roads weren't paved." - Will Rogers

### ON A WING AND A PRAYER from the editor's desk

Cultures have been mesmerized with owls throughout history. Athena, the Greek Goddess of Wisdom was so impressed with the owl, it became her favorite feathered creature. Owls were believed to represent wisdom and have powers of prophecy in early Indian Folklore. In an *Aesop's Fable* a wise owl counseled the birds.

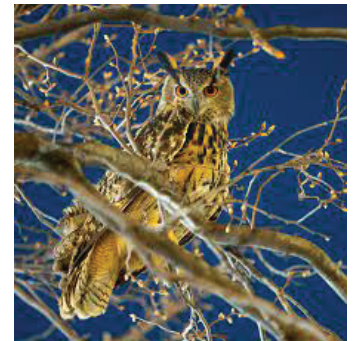


Photo NY Times

Flaco, a Eurasian eagle-owl was born in New York City's Central Park Zoo in 2010. The only known creature of his kind living in North America. An ornithologist acknowledged this type bird is one of the largest and most powerful species of owl.

Early this past February, vandals cut the mesh wire of his enclosure allowing him to escape. He must have been in shock as he flew into the midst of New York City's pandemonium.

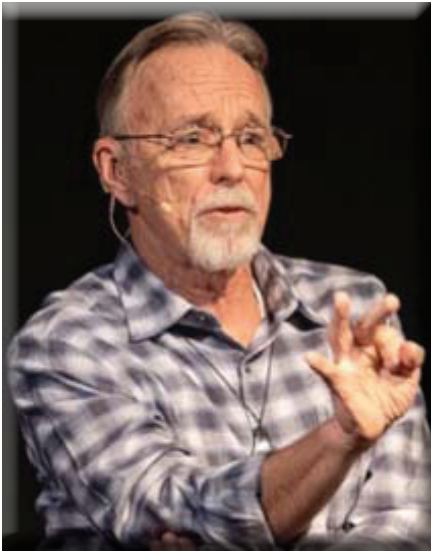
News of Flaco's plight thrust the city into turmoil. There was concern he may not have the resilience to survive. News soon spread far beyond the city by multimedia news. Zoo keepers, reporters, photographers and citizens were on the lookout hoping to capture and save him. The director of the International Owl Center eventually spotted him, saying that Flaco seemed stressed and his flying looked somewhat unsteady.

Following authorities many attempts to catch him, it was feared without hunting skills he would starve. But those fears were finally allayed. With the help of citizens and bird watchers, Flaco was ultimately spotted in Central Park clutching a rat in his talons. It appeared his natural survival instincts kicked in following his escape into the wild.

His fame has attracted large crowds of locals, tourists and birders flocking into Central Park. He is thriving and was even seen fighting off approaching ravens. **Flaco has become a celebrity!**

Submit articles for JTHT FALL 2023 issue to: Sylvia Payne, JTHT Editor, E-mail: [sylviapay98@gmail.com](mailto:sylviapay98@gmail.com) - Deadline for Fall Issue: November 15, 2023.





## FROM THE PRESIDENT

There is SO much interest in the STORY these days! It is a concept, way of communicating, and art form that shows everywhere in the media and online. The business community, our educational systems, and popular culture now

look for compelling stories and powerful storytelling more than ever. Just look at all the stimulating ideas about story and storytelling in THIS issue of our JTHT!

Storytelling has recovered from the pandemic and is thriving all across NC and our region. The North Carolina Storytelling Guild (NCSG) continues contributing to this renewal. As reported elsewhere, our Winter Workshop was a big success. Our upcoming **SPRING RETREAT with Megan Wells at Wildacres Retreat** promises to be a unique opportunity for storytellers to learn together with one of our most gifted teachers. (PLUS ample time for relaxation, fun, good food, and fellowship!) There are still a few spots open! (**Note: see end of article for Spring Retreat link information. p.6**)

Our Festival Committee has exciting plans for our FIFTH annual fall festival - the **OLD NORTH STATE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL** - at the Cary Theater on Nov. 3 & 4. Four Showcase Performances will feature **Donna Washington, Kim Weitkamp, Lepbone Redding, Lona Bartlett, and Larry Pearlman with Emcee Greg Whitt**. PLUS, our very own Kanute Rarey will lead a Friday afternoon workshop for storytellers:

[Starting From Scratch – A Beginner’s Guide to Finding an Audience and a Place to Tell and the Keys to Telling a Story](#). This workshop combines finding a place, building an audience and community support, and telling your story with a brief review of story creation and crafting. Participants get new ideas, share their experiences and take home a guide to build their own storytelling program.

Our Grant Committee submitted a grant application to the NC Arts Council for a \$7200 grant from their “Spark the Arts” program. This grant will allow NCSG to expand promotion and marketing for our fall Festival if

awarded. Our goal is to grow our audience to pre-Pandemic levels. (In 2019, we sold out three of our four Showcases.) We have also expanded our outreach by forming partnerships with five local retirement communities. We will offer free tickets to our Saturday morning Showcase. In addition, the retirement community staff will recruit their members and provide transportation.

Our Scholarship and Regional Grants committee has made several financial awards this fiscal year to help Guild members afford storyteller workshops and sponsor regional training events. We encourage Guild members to apply. (**See end of article for link to member application. p.6**)

**NCSG operates on a fiscal year that begins July 1.** Here are the results of our recent election for our Guild leaders for 7/1/23 thru 6/30/24.

- President - Steve Tate
- President-Elect - Sam Pearsall
- Treasurer - Paul Stutts
- Journal Editor - Sylvia Payne
- Historian - Catherine MacKenzie
- Eastern Representative - Alan Hoal
- Western Representative - Nancy Reeder
- Members-At-Large -
  - Will Brigham
  - Greg Whitt
  - Naomi Faw

We appreciate all NCSG members! Thanks to all those who volunteer their time and talents on the Board, Committees, and planning for our events and programs.

Finally, I sincerely thank several members who have given YEARS of devoted service to NCSG. Beginning July 1, these folks are stepping away from their leadership positions to enjoy less responsibility and more well-deserved free time! BIG THANK YOU to Catherine MacKenzie, Henry Vogel, Joan Leotta, and Deborah Winkler. And very SPECIAL thanks go to Jim and Sylvia Payne for the MANY years they have given helping to form and lead our Guild. It is not possible to list their many contributions! Suffice it to say, when we tell the STORY of NCSG - the two of them will be main characters in the plot!

*Continued next page*

## SPRING RETREAT with MEGAN WELLS

Imagine this...you have a story, yearning to come to life, grow, and bloom in the world. So you and your story escape from daily distractions to a quiet lodge on top of a beautiful NC mountain. Then with care and humility, you tell your story to one of the most sought-after storytelling coaches in the country, surrounded by a circle of Delighted Listeners - your storyteller friends eager to learn with you - as your coach lovingly helps you polish your little gem. And in the process, we all learn together and enjoy the unique alchemy of storytelling.

If this appeals to you, REGISTER now. Spaces are limited and filling fast.

(See end of article for link to member application.)

- Special format: 19 participants, 1 leader
- Ten who sign up to bring a story for a one-on-one coaching session with Megan observed by the whole group. This story also performed at Sunday morning OLIO. The registration fee for a coaching spot is \$350. All coaching spots are filled.
- 4 Delighted Listener learner spots are now open.
- Sign up now to be a part of the Delighted Listener Learner audience and learn from the pro-

cess. The registration fee for a Delighted Listener Learner spot is \$225.

- Scholarships are available. (See link below to find out about scholarships.)
- Registration fee is ALL inclusive of lodging, meals, snacks, & learning together.

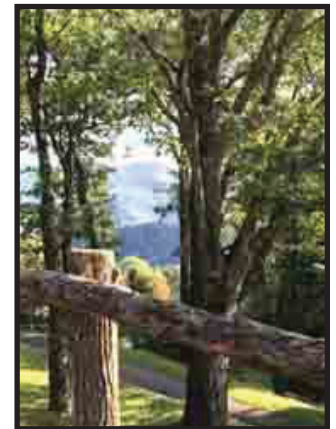
For additional information or questions contact Steve: [stevenkenttate@gmail.com](mailto:stevenkenttate@gmail.com)

- Sunday morning performance Olio of the ten stories.
- Saturday evening fellowship time for fun, healing, and singing with our Tribe.
- Contact Dianne Hackworth for more detail and to register for one of the limited spots.

[dianne@diannehackworth.com](mailto:dianne@diannehackworth.com)



Megan Wells



Wildacres

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/i2QR2N5/springretreat>

## The Old North State Storytelling Festival November 3-4, 2023 at the Cary theater, Cary, NC

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

<https://www.facebook.com/OldNorthStateStorytellingFestival/>

### CONTACTS:

[oldnorthstatestorytelling@gmail.com](mailto:oldnorthstatestorytelling@gmail.com)

[336.540.4401](tel:336.540.4401)



## GIVING THE STORY POWER BY BRENDA KAY LEDFORD

“We want to internalize the story, like a musician who has played ‘My Funny Valentine’ a zillion times. And when the story is internalized, we’re on automatic. Now we are free to give the story power—to give ourselves over to the tale and the tellin.”

--Brother Blue, in *Homespun: Tales from America’s Favorite Storytellers*

The first thing we have to do is find a story that excites us. A tale that we can relate to and can’t wait to tell. Other than telling stories that we actually experienced, how do we find the “right” tale?

One place I’ve found great stories was at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina. The folk school offers many storytelling classes and I’ve taken many of them. Just the mountain atmosphere, the old buildings, and beautiful background of forests, rolling pastures, and wildflowers, get the creative juices flowing at this unique school.

One fantastic storyteller whom I studied under was Donald Davis. I have taken classes under Diane Hackworth and other great teachers who inspired me to spin my own tales.

Sometimes I tell stories about my family or friends. The tales may be humorous or a story to make a point. As a retired educator, I may spin a story for children. I

may scan the children’s book section at my local library for ideas. I often find ideas reading the children’s picture books.

We are also fortunate to have a wide selection of nonfiction books at our local library on storytelling. These reference books are great to foster ideas for spinning tales. One section is the Cherokee Cultural Center at Moss Memorial Library. You’ll find many fiction and nonfiction books on the Cherokee history and culture.

Another avenue for gleaning ideas for storytelling, is the Mountain Area Storytellers Open Mic Night held monthly at the Corner Coffee and Wine Shop in Hayesville, NC. Kanute Rarey is the host of this exciting event ([kanutetells@gmail.com](mailto:kanutetells@gmail.com)).

You give the story power when you internalize it. Make the story your story. When you can relate to the story personally, the audience will be able to experience the exciting story, too.

## THE FIVE C’S OF STORYTELLING BY BRENDA KAY LEDFORD

Uncle Reuben Ledford was a master storyteller. Every time our family got together; he was the center of attention. It just came naturally to him. He had no training telling a story. It just came off the top of his head. Spontaneous. Some folks said it was inherited, but nobody in our family could spin a yarn like my uncle.

He included the five C’s in his story. Circumstance, Curiosity, Characters, Conversations, and Conflict.

The circumstance established the scene. He always included the setting and when the story took place. He often spun tales about his growing up in the Matheson Cove during the 1930s. He included gestures to give visual clues to the Appalachian culture and the mountain folks. For example, he demonstrated Granddaddy Bob chewing tobacco and spitting off the porch. The hound dogs yelped and “took off like scalded dogs” when the juice struck them.

Uncle Reuben stirred up our curiosity with his stories. He knew how to engage the audience and keep us interested. What would happen when he refused to obey Pa and come out of the tree? Would he get a whipping for disobeying Pa?

We related to the characters in Uncle Reuben’s stories. They were like us. We loved them, we hated them. They brought out emotions and were real. They made the story come alive.

There was always a lot of conflict in his tales. We sat on the edge of our seats wondering what would happen between him and Pa? When Pa yelled, “Come down from that tree, or I’ll whip the shirt off your back.”

There was a joint holding of our breaths when Uncle Reuben said he yanked off his shirt, threw it down to

*Continued next page*



the ground. "Here's my shirt," he passed his father. Oh, no! Uncle Reuben was in hot water forever with his pa.

Of course, Uncle Reuben's story got our family to talking. We interrupted each other asking questions. "Did you really do that? What did your pa do? You were a real trouble maker."

Finally, Uncle Reuben Ledford included the Five C's of Storytelling and didn't even know he was

doing it. These tips for telling a powerful story may enhance your storytelling: **Circumstance, Curiosity, Characters, Conversations, and Conflict.** Try this the next time to spin a tall tale.

*Brenda Kay Ledford is a retired educator, published writer, author, blogger, and award-winning poet/writer. She enjoys telling stories about her family and Appalachian culture. She may be contacted at: [ledfordbrenda@hotmail.com](mailto:ledfordbrenda@hotmail.com). She blogs at: <http://blueridgepoet.blogspot.com>.*



## Storytelling Shows and Classes Thriving in Weaverville by Chuck Fink

**S**ince the debut show that opened the performance

venue at Weaverville Community Center in October 2021, storytelling keeps moving at full speed just north of Asheville. To date nine shows have been produced by the Weaverville Center for Creative and Healthy Living (WCCHL), with Chuck Fink and Jill Totman-community volunteer champions. The "spiritual leader" and prime driver of WCCHL and the storytelling shows at The Center is WCCHL board chair, Tom Balistreri. You'd be hard pressed to find a harder working volunteer.

Previous shows at The Weaverville Community Center featured Chet Allen, Ray Christian, Catherine Yael Serota, Wallace Shealy, and NCSG members Larry Pearlman, Sherry Lovett, Charlie St. Clair, Becky Stone, Lee Lyons, Chuck Fink, and Kathy Gordon.

Participants in a storytelling class which ran in November and December at The Center, premiered their new storytelling chops January 17<sup>th</sup>. This was their first time performing in front of any audience. They wowed an audience of 80 people, receiving a standing ovation and a healthy take from the gratuity baskets.

February reigned as the month of love, when 4 storytellers shared their love stories at The Center, February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Joining Pat Whitson were two NCSG members, Sherry Lovett and Chuck Fink. Chuck told in tandem with his wife Cindy, as they brought their podcast, "In Love with The Finks" to the stage. As a bonus for audi-

ence members, ALL shows at The Center are free, with a gratuity basket as a recommended option.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> largest audience to date at The Center enjoyed our show August 19, 2022. More than 140 people filled the audience to the point that extra seating on the porch was needed. Tellers included Ray Christian, Becky Stone, Jim McDowell, aka The Black Potter, and Wallace Bohanon. After the show, Ray told Chuck that the audience was the most responsive he's seen in his many travels all over the world. He said their joy kept the energy on stage thriving. He added this was the first time in his memory that 4 Black storytellers performed without any White tellers joining them on stage. Weaverville takes great pride and joy in creating a bit of Storytelling history.

If the August 19<sup>th</sup> show didn't put the Weaverville Community Center on the map as a hot new location for storytelling, then this April 20<sup>th</sup> show, catapulted The Center and Weaverville. The biggest show offered to date graced the stage as we hosted Josh Goforth and Michael Reno Harrell, at The Weaverville Community Center. These two superstars, who often grace the stage in Jonesborough, told and sang fun and fresh material, both old and new. The audience showered their appreciation over Josh and Michael as the duo thrilled folks fortunate to attend the show. Let's just say the gratuity baskets overflowed. Once again, The Weaverville Community Center is letting the world of storytelling know a new hot spot for sharing the art is just 5 miles north of Asheville.

*Chuck has a Podcast, with his wife, Cindy. Prior to retiring from a career as a trainer and organizational consultant Chuck wove stories into his classes, consulting, and to any willing listener. His Podcast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTY2W-earME>*



**T**he Southern Piedmont Region partnered with Janice Davin to offer a free Zoom workshop for all NCSG members. The Mementos Workshop was enjoyed on February 11, 2023. Janice gave us the chance to experience how reconstructing memories is a process. The emotional truth or the core is what we get right even if all of the details are not exactly correct.

We all have objects that we keep because of their mnemonic value. Janice led the way by showing participants how to use a tool called clustering to explore how an object that holds a memory can help us to discover many stories, in addition to the story of the special memory. Using a target word for the object, many words come to mind and then began to radiate out in all directions. Janice's personal examples of how this works were engaging!

Participants were sent to breakout rooms to explore the possibilities within their own objects. To start the cluster work, a target word for the memento was used. Handouts were provided to assist the process. Individuals in each room were to help each other to entertain the possibilities of random associations that the object might suggest. This unlocked the magic of our own minds. Random associations between thoughts

had a mushrooming effect. Lona felt she needed entire walls of space to expand since a piece of paper was too confining.

The bonus was to hear Janice tell her story and to see how she worked the process. What was more, she shared all of her slides with those who attended plus with those who had wished to attend but could not. This was excellent because we ran out of time before Janice could get through all of her enlightening material. Our NCSG is truly a treasure trove of individuals!

*Deborah Winkler has served as the Southern Piedmont Area Representative since July of 2017. Deborah has organized ZOOM gatherings for the S. Piedmont Region with various topics. At times she organizes learning workshops and invites all Guild members. You may contact her at: [winklerdeborah@yahoo.com](mailto:winklerdeborah@yahoo.com)*



## A MEMORABLE WORKSHOP

by Deborah Winkler

## What's Happening with Larry Pearlman

### Sharing an Idea

In an auction last year, I sold seats at a storytelling event that I would put on. Since there were only going to be 7 people there, I decided to try something I had never done before. I went prepared to tell three stories but also invited each attendee to share a story if they wanted to. I let them know about it in advance so they could decide and come prepared. Since it was to be an intimate group, I held it at my girlfriend's home and provided some refreshments. Some, like popcorn,

were easy to enjoy during the stories. I also had a pie and coffee so we had a break in the middle.

I told a 15-minute story and then we had relatively short stories from a couple of attendees. Following that, we retired to the dining room for pie and coffee and vibrant conversation/informal stories. Then it was time for two more stories from me which we decided to do at the dining room table. It was a fabulous evening. Try it some time. *Larry Pearlman*

"When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us." - *Helen Keller*

## GOING GREAT SINCE '98

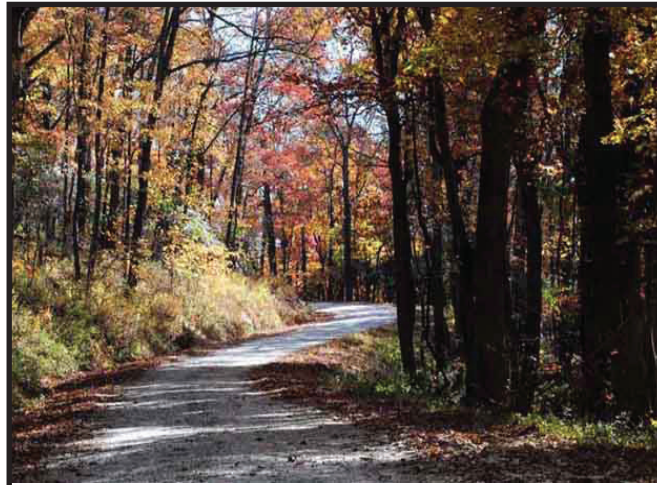
by Nancy Reeder

The North Carolina Storytelling Guild began with several events in the early 1990s. Storyteller *dreamers* met at a storytelling get-together discussing how terrific it would be to have a statewide organization to keep them in communication with tellers across the state. Then storyteller and librarian, Terry Rollins, created the Journal of Tar Heel Tellers, which aptly brought together these future founders. As the organizer and publisher, and with help from his knowledgeable friend and computer guru, Mark Russel, Rollins published the premier issue in June 1994, copyrighted by the Library of Congress. This journal put interested storytellers in touch with NC storytelling events and people.

For the next four years, the list of subscribers increased. In March, 1998, these storytellers convened at the JTHT *Relighting the Spark* Storytelling Retreat at Browns Summit, NC with the theme, "Don't content yourself with being just an ordinary truthful person; learn to tell stories." In the June 1998 issue of the JTHT, Rollins made a surprise announcement: "Current subscribers to the Journal will continue to receive the remaining issues of their subscription at no extra cost, and will automatically become members of the *Guild*."

From this, a resounding YES was heard from storytellers which placed the gears in motion for the organization to flourish. Rollins also made a second announcement proclaiming, "The Journal of Tar Heel Tellers is now the voice of the *NC Storytelling Guild*." The North Carolina Storytelling Guild became a reality—a storytelling organization to keep tellers in communication across the state.

Since that beginning, the Guild has had numerous members serve as officers of this voice for storytelling promotion. Two strategic events, one in the western part of North Carolina, and the second in the eastern began about the same time. In the west, a spring workshop was held at the Wildacres Retreat, in McDowell



*Wow, What a Journey!*

County in 1999, and continued to gather there over the past twenty-three years. In the east, Rollins along with the help of storyteller, Di-  
anne Hackworth, selected the site, Fort Caswell on Oak Island, to have a 3-day winter workshop, which began in 2000, continuing since then, only missing two years during the Pandemic.

Various well-known storytellers have led these workshops, instructing the

attendees in various storytelling methods. Each year since their inception these events have brought storytellers from all parts of the state, plus many from other states as well.

The JOURNAL OF TAR HEEL TELLERS, published bi-annually is the official newsletter of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild. Currently, since 2000, editor and publisher Sylvia Payne, collects articles/stories from members each spring and fall.

November 12, 1999, the NC Storytelling Guild after much planning and hard work, opened its first festival at the auditorium of the Greensboro Historical Museum, in downtown Greensboro. The fall festival for the next six years was held in different venues until it found a home at the Transylvania County Library from 2007 – 2013. A year was missed, then held in 2015, once again in Greensboro with yet, another year missed. In 2017, the NCSG Festival came to life in the Andy Griffith Playhouse in Mt. Airy. In 2018, the Guild celebrated its twenty-year anniversary showcasing its Charter members at the Henderson County Library. Sherry Lovett, a previous president of the Guild, published the Guild's history.

Over the past four years, the Guild's fall festival has been held in Cary, NC, finding a home for itself there, with the first weekend in November set aside for this well-attended event.

Storytelling events have sprouted throughout the state over the past twenty-five years. Through work-



shops, festivals, retreats, scholarships, grants, ZOOM groups and webinars, the Guild continues to thrive, while our one hundred-plus members lovingly promote the Guild with their own story-sharing throughout North Carolina and beyond.

Today the Guild continues to thrive with one hundred plus members and looks forward to the next twenty years and beyond of storytelling for North Carolina.

*Nancy Reeder loves adventure along with her three passions: Telling and writing stories, backpacking, and working with teachers to enhance their own storytelling in the classroom. Plus, she holds a master's degree in storytelling from East Tennessee State University, and is available for a variety of workshops. She may be contacted at: [nancyreeder@gmail.com](mailto:nancyreeder@gmail.com)*

## What's Happening with Donna Catton-Johnson



Donna Catton-Johnson told stories at Homewood Elementary School in Conway, SC. She did so before Covid and now they have invited her back! This past December, she was Mrs. Santa Claus at Socastee Elementary in Myrtle Beach, reading stories for their Christmas Family Night. Now that Donna has moved to the NC Mountains, it's been lovely to go back to her old stomping grounds.

## Santa Audition by Charles Plasters

Back in November, I was invited by the chamber of commerce to audition to play Santa Claus for the town. The job would include riding in the sleigh in the Christmas parade and holding court in the bandstand on the town square.

When I arrived at the town hall, I took one of the seats that were placed in a line across the room for the applicants. A black man chose the seat next to me and I must have had an inquisitive expression on my face, because he asked if I had never seen a black Santa.

I said that I had never thought about it. He said that black kids needed to have a Santa they could be comfortable with; just as white kids have.

Actually, he was more of a replica of Santa Claus than I, with his natural whiskers compared to my false beard. We had been instructed to make up only our faces. After Mr. Murray introduced himself, he asked me what color I thought God was. He said that everyone would imagine things that they had not actually seen based on their own experiences.

I would imagine things based on my white man's memory and he would see things based on his.

I began to think about impressions that I held and why. For example: The first time I heard the phrase,

"we are made in God's image," it was spoken by the Pastor of the Baptist Church. He was a tall distinguished looking white man. At six years old I decided that God must be a tall distinguished looking white man.

In our Sunday school books Jesus was illustrated as a tall auburn-haired young man with European features. As I got a little older and studied history and geography, I thought he would have appeared differently from how he was depicted. The part of the world where he was born did not produce any tall auburn-haired folks with European features.

Jesus was likely short and stocky and had a very dark complexion!

People who do not look like me, might look more like Jesus.

By the way, Mr. Murray and I became friends during the "tryouts", but neither of us got the job.

*Charles Plasters has been a storyteller ever since he could talk. He has a large supply of original stories of his own plus he borrows from old favorites such as "The Jack Tales," "Paul Bunyan" and others. He has written and published a humorous book titled, The Christmas Pageant. [charlesplasters@gmail.com](mailto:charlesplasters@gmail.com)*



## A Great Place to Sit a Spell by Robin Kitson

**I**t was a surprisingly cold night when Lona Bartlett and I got to the Bynum Front Porch. Bynum is a tiny town 5 miles from Pittsboro, it's also a bedroom community to Chapel Hill where UNC is the big employer. We entered, greeted by our long-time teller and friend Cynthia Raxter. Supper was coming, we had to catch up, welcome our crowd and do a mic check.

The Bynum Front Porch has an interesting little story. Built back during the depression it functioned as the town news center, convenience store (before there was ever such a thing) and post office. The neighbors with time to "sit a spell" rocked away inside and out sharing news and stories. Meanwhile the busy ones popped in to say hi and get that one missing item for those biscuits and ham while they picked up the mail. The store went on just the same over many years.

By 2003 there were lots of places to get groceries and talk so business slowed. The community of Bynum decided to start having music outside the general store to keep the store going. By 2007 the store was closing anyway. The community decided to not let it go so they took ownership, started a 403(b), and kept the music going.

Cynthia Raxter remembers most of it during her lifetime. She remembers two young folks who got their start right there in Bynum. Those youngins were regulars at the Friday night Bynum General Store. They lived in a very old house which had long been inhabited by a fella in a band. When time came to leap up to professional status those youngins asked the community to choose between 3 names and Chatham Rabbits was born. So, when you hear them on NPR know they started out at the Bynum Front Porch in that tight knit community 30 minutes from Chapel Hill.

By 2015 Cynthia suggested Storytelling on Saturday night to the board and they agreed. Next she got in touch with Alan Hoal, and Storytelling at the Bynum Front Porch started. Louise Omoto Kessel lived in Bynum, and it made sense that she was on stage that first time. Over these years lots of neighbors, little known tellers, kids, and a few big-name storytellers have graced that stage. Cynthia has created an atmosphere of "come as you are, sit a spell and enjoy".

On the night of March 11<sup>th</sup> Lona Bartlett and I shared the stage. We were waiting for the crowd to settle in when in walks our friend from Florida, Andy Russel. Andy Russel knows us from our Monday night practices with Steve Tate's online gathering. Andy has family in Burlington. He said he came because "Well I was coming up this way and just couldn't miss the chance to see you guys in person". We were shocked and honored to have Andy in our audience. While



*Continued next page*



storytellers support each other, it's a big deal to stop after coming all that way.

Everyone that tells at Bynum knows Cynthia Raxter, our retired librarian and storyteller. She has worked her tail off getting the Front Porch to fly like a bird and it has. During the pandemic she has had as many as 4000 people online watching. Talk about flying she has this place going so far you need binoculars to see it in the night sky.

Bynum Front Porch has led some younger folks to take a keen interest in the craft. Hats off to our Cynthia. She gave Lona and I time to share our gifts, and the

tips weren't shabby either. Cynthia is a master at welcoming folks to her small slice of heaven. She has created a following such that folks coming from the far north are known to hop off the interstate and head over to the Bynum Front Porch that great place to sit a spell in this busy world. Lona and I will always support Cynthia's friends, little kids and the soon to be famous who tell stories where old fashioned mailboxes light up the stage.

*Robin Kitson is a long standing Guild member. She is well known for her Cajun stories from the Ninth Ward in New Orleans where she grew up. You may contact her at: [nanirobin@gmail.com](mailto:nanirobin@gmail.com)*

## **RICE FESTIVAL by JOAN LEOTTA**

### **Rice Festival, March 4, 2023 Brunswick County**



Joan Leotta

For several months Marva Moss and I have been working with the Festival Director, George Beatty, and the Executive Director of the Brunswick County Arts Council to insert a storytelling component in this festival and to support storytelling as a part of the work

Mr. Beatty's group is doing to raise awareness of the Gullah Geechee culture in Brunswick County. In fact, rice was grown on the property adjacent to the grounds of Old Brunswick Town (a colonial-era settlement) where the recent festival was held.

The Saturday Festival was free to the public and ran from ten in the morning until five in the afternoon. Several community groups came together to help with stage set-up, parking, etc. In addition to two performance areas, Main and Children's, food trucks and a number of crafters, (two selling Carolina Gold heritage rice), lined the walkways. On the Main Stage of the Festival a series of educational talks and performances

on the Gullah culture were offered throughout the day punctuated with wonderful music.

Marva and I opened the Children's stage with storytelling. Marva told about enslaved children and told a folk tale. I told three folktales, one telling why roosters and cats are enemies, another telling about the use of kind words, and a third, the Aesop fable of the Tortoise and the Hare. We had a small audience, but the children at the surrounding craft tables –learning to dye with indigo and other colonial crafts coloring, and more, were able to hear us, enlarging the audience a bit.

It was a gorgeous day and audiences seemed to be enjoying everything that was available—the talks, the booths, the food, the music, and our storytelling.



Marva Moss

*Joan Leotta, an award-winning author, is currently serving on our Board as the Coastal Regional Representative. She was runner up in the Robert Frost National Poetry competition, 2022. She may be contacted at: [joanleotta@gmail.com](mailto:joanleotta@gmail.com)*

## SECOND BIRTH BY LARRY PEARLMAN



The world is changing  
  Has changed  
My world is changing  
  Has changed  
I don't like it....don't want it  
This feeling of melancholy...darkness.....anger

This is not me  
Or is it the new me?  
I don't like it....don't want it  
But does it matter what I want, what I like  
Or is it just what it is?

No....NO.....**NO**

I can choose  
  Will choose  
  Do choose

And I choose something different.  
Not going back to what was

What I did like, did want, thought was Me  
But allowing something new, something higher, some

thing transcendent to ap-  
pear

Always denied the pro-  
nouncement that light re-  
quired darkness  
That joy required sadness  
That wholeness required pain

Let that denial go  
Accept what was unacceptable  
Embrace the unembraceable  
Then go through the darkness, through the sadness,  
through the pain  
And see what will emerge from the chrysalis.

Let the becoming turn into Being  
Allow the birth and discover who I Am  
And truly Let Love Radiate

*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](mailto:larrypearlman42@gmail.com)*

## A Bit of Irish Humor by Ray Mendenhall

The old priest and the young priest met on the street one day. The young priest said to the old priest, "How you doing, Father?"

The old priest replied "fine my son, just fine."

"Tell me, Father," the young priest asked, "Are you still fighting the devil?"

"Ach, no." the old priest said.

"You're not fighting the devil?" the young priest said.

"Ach, no," the old priest replied.

"Why not," the young priest asked.

"You know how it is," the old priest said, "you get older and the devil gets older and the fight goes out of the both of you."

"So you've stop fighting?" the young priest inquired.

"Oh no," the old priest said, "I'm still fighting."  
"Who are you fighting now?" the young priest asked.

"I'm fighting God," the old priest said.

"You're fighting God?" the young priest said in dismay.

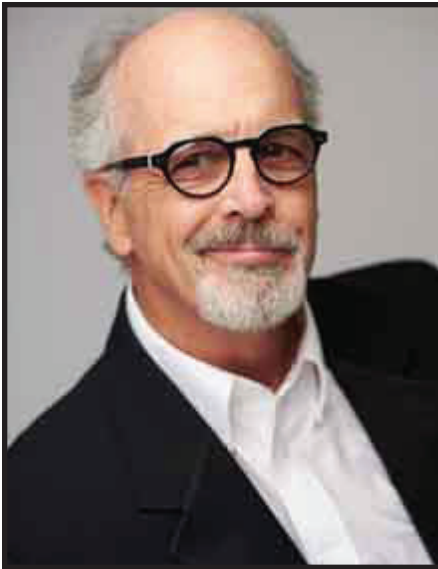
"Aye," the old priest said, "I'm fighting God."

"Who do you think is going to win?" the young priest asked?

The old priest smiled and said, "I hope He does."

*Storytelling and the Storytelling tradition is close to Ray's 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](mailto:rwmend@gmail.com)*





## BRING BACK THE AMPERSAND!

Mike Perry

“Where do stories come from?” They asked.

“And?” You said,

“What?”

“And! That’s where stories come from.”

There is a pause before you continue, addressing their confusion. “Stories come from wanting more. ‘And?’ That means asking questions. Exposing what once was hidden, like the 27th letter of the alphabet.”

“The 27th letter of the alphabet?”

Now you have them right where you want them.

Pause. “Yes... ‘&’...the 27th letter.”

Now they are curious. Now they are an audience. A beautifully stated question, a simple ‘What?’ begs for an explanation, or, in our parlance, a story, & why use one sentence when many will do? A story must ensue!

The ‘&,’ the ampersand, was once considered to be the 27th letter of the alphabet. Found on early American samplers following the letter ‘Z,’ over time the ampersand failed to successfully join the other 26. What a loss! But alas, the lonely ‘&’ isn’t really alphabetical or numeric.

The beautifully simple ‘plus sign’ in math demands that we ‘add this to that.’ So I suppose that mathematicians never considered adopting the ampersand. And the alphabet? It requires that phonemes make sounds to contribute to expressing the words we think and say as we transfer thought to print.

But the ampersand? The symbol ‘&’? It evolved as an elision of the letters ‘e’ and ‘t,’ ‘et’ from the Latin word

*and*. Because it represented a word, the symbol ‘&’ was forced to stand alone. It was added to the end of the alphabet, following the letter ‘Z.’ Interestingly, this explains the etymology of the word ‘ampersand.’ It is simply a ligature of the spoken words, “and-per-se-and.” After reciting the final letters of the alphabet, “X, Y, Z,” the student would add, “and-per-se-‘&’,” meaning “and, by itself, (the word) &.”

Perhaps it is the improv lover in me that finds tremendous loss in no longer including ‘&’ at the end of the alphabet. Or perhaps I feel a loss of childhood. Children love to interrupt by asking, “And?” And children have always related their own stories simply by stringing together events. “And then... and then... and then...”

And then ‘&’ was eliminated from contributing to the alphabet. Since then I suspect that adult storytellers have had to work harder. With ‘&’ no longer part of the alphabet, the ampersand’s loss was at the expense of curiosity. I fear that the ‘mature’ alphabet of 26 letters has lost its childhood. And with ‘&’ removed, adults have fallen out of practice. ‘And?’ As a result? Perhaps they stopped asking for more. ‘And then? And then?’ Perhaps this is why we must ‘tell’ them stories. Audiences simply have forgotten to ask, ‘And?’

And what *per se* can be done? I say, bring back the ampersand! And? Add it to the alphabet song! And? Print it in the phonics books! ‘&’ assuming its rightful place as the last letter, it will retain its power as contributing the last word! More should be required, ‘&’ More thought. ‘&’ More curiosity. ‘&’ More listening? ‘&?’ Isn’t that what storytelling is all about?

*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 one of the tellers at the Old North State Storytelling Festival, November, 2021. He may be contacted at: [MikePerry.Storyteller@Gmail.com](mailto:MikePerry.Storyteller@Gmail.com)*

**Add the date to your Calendar!**

**The Old North State Storytelling Festival**

**November 3-4, 2023**

**at the Cary theater, Cary, NC**



## BETH by Jim Payne

Beth didn't have any hair. She used to have hair. Long curly, auburn hair that glistened in the sun. She didn't have any hair now because it all fell out during her chemotherapy. She didn't really mind though. Because she could do other things now with her time instead of fussing with her hair. Like going to visit the other kids on her floor and play with them.

Her favorite doctor was Raymond Grant. He was tall with dark brown skin and a really big smile. Yesterday when he came to visit with her, he had a big red ball stuck on his nose. A ball like clowns in the circus had. It made her laugh. Yesterday was her birthday. She was now five years old.

Her mom came to her birthday party yesterday. Beth invited all of the kids on her floor to the birthday party. Everyone had a great time at her birthday party, and doctor Raymond stopped by also to wish her a happy birthday.

Dr. Raymond came to see Beth a month before her sixth birthday. He needed to examine her and see if she was strong enough to have some special lab work done. Beth was glad to see him, but it was difficult for her to stand now, and Dr. Raymond examined her while she lay in her bed. After he finished examining her, he told Beth he'd be back to see her the next day after he'd had time to look over the lab results. When he returned to see her the next day, he told her that they would have to postpone the lab work until she was stronger.

Beth had trouble sleeping now, and had strange dreams about flying. Dr. Raymond met with Beth's mom and told her that Beth wouldn't last much longer, as her strength was failing, her young body was finally tiring of its fight with the cancer. He told her that he would do everything in his power to keep Beth comfortable and pain free.

On a bright, cold morning in early December, Dr. Raymond came to see Beth, and brought her a present. She lay in her bed and slowly turned her head to look at him. He had a fat, cardboard tube tucked under his arm, and said that he had a present for her. After he helped her sit up in bed, he removed the cap on the top of the tube and pulled a piece of cloth from it. He

shook it out with his hands, and laid it on the floor next to her bed. When he looked at it for a minute, it slowly rose in the air and hovered right next to her at the edge of her bed.

Dr. Raymond lifted her up from her bed and let her gently sit down on the cloth. It now started to change colors and change shape as she looked at it in wonderment. It was a faint orange, then red, then a light green. It now had a fringe all around its edges and had beautiful patterns covering the surface, like a beautiful painting.

Dr. Raymond walked slowly to the door to her room and the cloth with Beth sitting on it followed. They went down the empty hall, past the nurse's station, and past the storytelling corner. Nobody saw or heard them as they traveled down the hall. As they reached the end of the hallway, they disappeared as if swallowed up by a heavy fog.

The next morning, a nurse found Beth in her bed. She had died peacefully in her sleep during the night. Beth's mother came to the hospital as quickly as she could. She asked to see Dr. Raymond. The only doctor that Beth really liked. The nurse told Beth's mother that they didn't have any Dr. Raymond on the staff at the hospital. No doctor fit his description.

When Beth's mother gathered Beth's belongings together to take home, she came across a big red ball. A big red ball like a circus clown would wear. Then she remembered Dr. Raymond wearing that nose during Beth's birthday party.



*Jim Payne is a poet and short story writer. He currently serves on our NCSG board. He may be contacted at: [jpaynehorizon@gmail.com](mailto:jpaynehorizon@gmail.com)*

### Quotes by Plato:

- "Opinion is the medium between knowledge and ignorance."
- "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle." ...



imals. The corn ears were divided among two mules - Cora and Ida, a group of pigs and hogs, and the chickens who received their share of cracked corn.

We were happy to see the corn pile slowly become low enough - about a foot from the floor, to allow us to search for little critters who made their homes in the bin. From time to time, we heard the sounds of mice.

It was not long before we heard the squeaks of baby mice! Quickly, we dug through the corn shucks and dust. Down into the bin we discovered a litter of baby mice! What a wonderful sight! We knew the rules about handling the little, hairless bodies, with closed eyes. "Don't touch them," our parents had warned, "or the mother will move her babies to another location."

For days, we kept an eye on those babies. Soon, their eyes opened. And their little bodies were almost covered with hair. We held the little, warm bodies. Their tiny feet felt tickly as they crawled across our hands!

Finally, the time had come, when we could take our little friends home! There, we could feed them homemade biscuit crumbs, give them warm milk, and keep them as our new found pets. Gently, we gathered them in the bottom of our shirts for the trip to our farmhouse. On the long kitchen table, covered with a pretty vinyl tablecloth, we presented the litter of squirming baby mice to the ladies of the house. Can you imagine the sights and sounds of these three ladies as they were screaming while running down the hallway, away from the kitchen?

No! There was no screaming or running to escape the baby mice! Why not? Because ... Once upon a time, these ladies too, had brought home - baby mice!

*Marva is as a storyweaver, educator, and creative writer, she spins a 'story web' to stimulate imaginations, and generates a love for listening, reading and writing. She is a former Guild Board Member and very active in the NC's coastal region. She may be contacted at: [owlcottage@atmc.net](mailto:owlcottage@atmc.net)*

The family farmer built an old corn barn, probably in the 40's or 50's on a ten-acre site in rural Brunswick County, North Carolina. The barn stood proudly and showed off its boards, made from the trees of a nearby swamp-like marsh. The trees had been sawed and shaved for the making of the building. Heavy boards arranged in a z-shape, gave added support to the heavy gray, wooden barn door.

The corn section faced the doorway of the old barn. The barn was divided into several areas. On the first floor was the corn bin, also a place for grading cured tobacco, a tool section for small arm equipment, and steps which resembled a ladder, led upstairs to a second floor. On the second floor, oats of hay and dried peanut plants were stored for the farm animals. That level also housed grandpapa's treasured wine making machinery, and several wooden barrels.

Corn ears, encased in cream colored shucks, were tossed in the corn bin. Sometimes the corn pile was as high as the ceiling. For the first few weeks after the corn was stored there, when we opened the barn door, the smell of corn and its shucks gave out waves of fresh scents, as the shucks began to dry.

The four of us - two sisters, a brother, and a cousin, were responsible for feeding the corn to the farm an-

## What's Happening with Tim Lowry

### Storyteller Tim Lowry is publishing a book!

To quote the British actor J. L. Toole: "I don't often get my stories into the dignity of print." However, after twenty years on the road as a Charles Dickens in-

terpreter, I have some fantastic tales relating to the world's most beloved ghost story-- *A Christmas Carol*. I'm recruiting donors and readers.

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



## Roadhouse Storytellers are April Fools by Sam Pearsall



“Happy April Fools Day! That’s our show for tonight. Thanks for coming.” Those were the first words out of my mouth as I opened Roadhouse Storytellers<sup>(R)</sup> second post Covid show on April 1, 2023. But no one got up to leave. If anything, they just settled in and waited for it all, whatever that might be, to happen.

Many years ago, I read a book called Little, Big; or The Fairies’ Parliament by John Crowley (Bantam 1981). A paraphrased aphorism from that book has been my storytelling motto since I started telling stories on stage in 2013, ten years ago. The aphorism: “With any good story, the further in you go, the bigger it gets.” Well, that is how it has been going with the story of Roadhouse Storytellers.

“Roadhouse Storytellers -- An Accidental Success Story” was the first article I wrote about the Roadhouse Storytellers. It appeared in the Journal of Tar Heel Tellers (Spring 2019) and told the story of how hungry I was for a place to tell stories and bring other storytellers to the stage. Finally, I found a venue at the Pittsboro Roadhouse, cut a deal with the management, and launched Roadhouse Storytellers in 2017. In the following three years, Roadhouse Storytellers featured 55 storytellers from five states.

Then Covid happened. The Pittsboro Roadhouse went out of business, and there were no Roadhouse Storytellers shows for almost three years. But after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Old North State Storytelling Festival in November 2021, the Town of Cary, NC decided to bet on us. So, we finally had our Roadhouse Storytellers revival in the town’s Page Walker Arts and History Center on September 9, 2022. Willa Brigham, Linda Gorham, Alan Hoal, and I told to a sold-out crowd of 50. The Page Walker Center is an intimate setting, the stage is only a foot high, and there is no microphone nor any stage lights. It was incredibly sweet to tell there. I published an article “Roadhouse Storytellers Revival Sold Out!” for the Journal of Tar Heel Tellers (Fall 2022) bragging, as I am wont to do, about the no-longer accidental success of our venture.

On April Fools Day 2023, the revived Roadhouse Storytellers staged its next performance at the Page Walker. The town reconfigured the venue to hold 72 patrons, 50% more than the first show, and it sold out 12 days in advance. Even with the extra chairs, the

venue remained quite intimate, and people were very busy talking with each other, including strangers, until I hustled them into their seats for the show.

Lona Bartlett opened with an old Cherokee folk tale, “Why Possum’s Tail is Bare” and then told a sweet story of love, heartbreak, and redemption, “Those Old Songs, Stories, and Poems.”

Mike Perry opened his set with “What Can I Do” a modern fairy tale about losing hopelessness and learning to have fun. He followed that with “The Butterfly Effect,” another original, this one about chaos theory and the circle of life. Try that one on!

Janel Behm followed the desserts and coffee break with a hilarious tall tale cum just-so story, “Boobaloo, Part 1” followed by a funny then dear personal narrative “Palm Sunday Parenting.” Her timing was spot on; the day after the event was Palm Sunday. Finally, I told two tall tales, “Cricket Spitting” and “Worm Grunting.” All four of us held the audience’s rapt attention, and the tears and laughter were our rewards. The energy in the room was intense, and people didn’t want to leave!

Roadhouse Storytellers now has put 58 storytellers from seven states on stage. The mailing list for Roadhouse Storytellers is growing. Our audiences are rapidly growing in size and certainly growing more appreciative. I got my very first fan letter from a stranger after the April Fools show! But there are no strangers in storytelling. The community of storytellers and story lovers who are followers of Roadhouse Storytellers is growing. The storytellers are growing their ambition to tell truly and well. The universe defined by our stories outgrows our telling. So, the further in you go, the bigger it gets. Really!

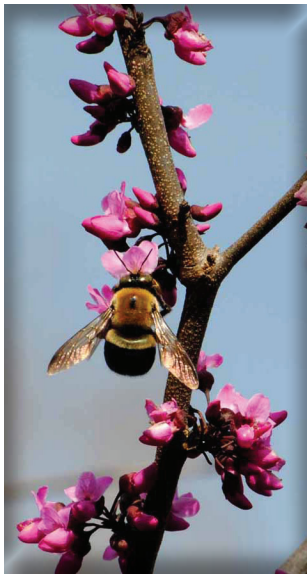


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Sam Pearsall is a professional storyteller whose practice is to tell tall tales and true tales based on his own experiences. In early 2017, he founded and for three years produced Roadhouse Storytellers® at the renowned Pittsboro, NC Roadhouse until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

[Sam@SamStories.org](mailto:Sam@SamStories.org) or <https://SamStories.org>

**Roadhouse Storytellers** the morning after: Sam Pearsall, Mike Perry, Lona Bartlett, Janel Behm



## RENEWAL by Sylvia Payne

*"A walk in the park, or even just looking out a window at some trees, decreases blood pressure, stress hormones and symptoms of anxiety and depression."*

News Reporter, Sadie Dingfelder

Springtime brings a breath of fresh air and newness. It's my favorite time of year. A time when everything comes to life. There is such beauty in all that awakens. Winter is nature's time of rest and restoration.

worries dissolve. God's creation immediately refreshes and uplifts my spirits. My soul is restored.

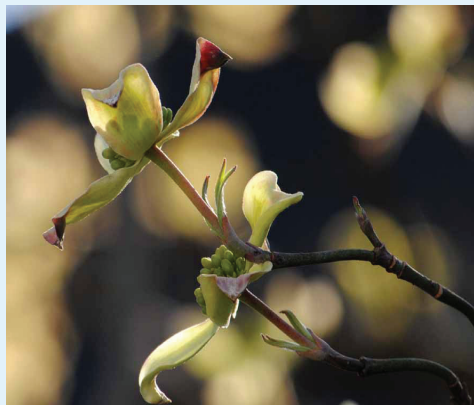
Green can be a healing power, restful and relaxing to the human eye. Green bestows a sense of renewal, energy, hope, and endurance. If one's spirit seems downcast, what better remedy than a visit with nature? Viewing life as seen through our Creator's handiwork, is a positive confirmation of Nature's healing power.

In winter, trees and plants go inward. To mankind they appear to be inactive. This is far from the truth. They are busy, their root systems growing, saving water and nutrients for the energy they need for spring. A time when growth appears hasty, bursting forth. In reality, Spring's release of Winter's work.

*Sylvia Payne grew up listening to her mother tell family stories. A former children's librarian, she has been telling stories and presenting workshops for over 40 years. She is a former NC Humanities Road Scholar. She may be contacted at: [sylviapay98@gmail.com](mailto:sylviapay98@gmail.com)*

Springtime gives me freshness and inspiration. Just to smell and inhale fresh air, feel a breeze touch my face, listening to bird song, watching bluebirds fly in and out of our birdhouses. Here in Piedmont North Carolina, hues of green surround us.

I love to explore outdoors seeking opportunities for photographs. Photography is one of my hobbies. I never tire of searching for closeups in my own backyard. Any time I can be surrounded by nature, my



I spent the week with ninth graders. Lots of them. I was in a couple of schools that don't often get any outside funding for visiting artists or artists in residence. We spent the week working with kinetic writing.

Kinetic writing is the act of engaging the body and the brain in writing activities before you put pen to paper. I am a huge fan of this type of work with children.

For starters, writing is a different language. You don't write exactly as you speak. When we are speaking, we have the advantage of the pitch of our voices, the intensity of our movement, our expressions, our energy, and how emphatically we express ourselves. The majority of our person to person contact is not with words. Writing is nothing but words.

I start by asking the kids if anyone likes writing. If they hate it. If they are ambivalent about it. Most kids said they hated it. A few said they didn't mind it. Only one or two in each class said they liked to write.

I found out that in NC, they stopped administering the writing test in fourth grade, and so some elementary schools stopped teaching writing. That sounds odd, but schools have so many assessments, they teach to the tests, and if they are not testing something, they don't teach it. I found out that the eleventh graders were learning what nouns were.

I told them why I write books. I explained that when I was a kid, I didn't have many books where the kids in them looked like me or my family. Several of the kids nodded and one of them - a black girl - folded her arms and just nodded emphatically. I love magical realism, and most books with black girls in them didn't get to go on those kinds of adventures. They didn't get the magic or entry into fantastic worlds, and that was what I wanted for myself. So, I am determined to write books where girls and boys who look like me get to have that kind of magic when they read.

I explained that we need their stories as well. They will be in charge of our country in the coming years, and we need them to be ready for that. Some of them look stunned that this was their job!

I also explained that if you really want to control people, you control what they read, and what they have access to. Banning and Burning books isn't necessary if people never even bother to write their stories or share their experiences.

Their voices are powerful. Their experiences are important. Most of them were surprised by that.



## **Kinetic Writing - With Ninth Graders**

**Donna Washington**

After that, the students played "The Good Thing Was/The Bad Thing Was" It is a story game. I love story games! (*See website for story games at end of article*)

We had a wonderful time, and when we were done, we had a writing exercise.

We did compound writing. Compound writing is a low stress way to get kids to write something.

1. First, before anything - They put their names at the top of the page!!!
2. Each person writes the first few lines of a story. They need a character, setting, and a problem. They can use the same process we employed during the circle story creation. We have been talking about launching stories for a bit, and they have had a chance to create at least one in group.

Once there was a \_\_\_\_\_. The good thing was \_\_\_\_\_. But, \_\_\_\_\_.

They aren't required to follow that format, but if they can't think of anything, they are welcome to do it that way. They only need a few sentences, but they can write as much as they want as long as they stay in the parameters of what is in the beginning of the story. (5 minutes)

3. The papers are then passed in to the facilitators, and everyone gets someone else's paper.
4. The next person skips two lines, and moves into the middle of the story. They write the next part. (5 Minutes)

*Continued next page*



5. After they finish writing, the person folds down the beginning of the story so that the only thing showing is what they wrote. The papers are passed to the facilitator.

6. The next person reads the middle without looking at how the story started, and write what they think comes next based on what they read. They do not end the story. (5 min)

7. The person folds the paper so what they just wrote is at the top. Papers are passed in to facilitator.

8. When they finish writing, they turn the paper over to the back (blank) side of the page. They draw two lines to divide the paper into three parts. They pass the papers in to the facilitator.

9. The next person reads the last thing that was written, flips the paper over and at the bottom on the back in the last third of the page, they write what they think happened at the end of the story. (5 minutes)

10. Papers are passed to the facilitator.

11. The next person who gets the paper reads the end of the story and writes what they think would belong in the middle of the story that would fit with the ending. (5 minutes)

12. Papers are collected.

13. The last person reads the middle and the end and tries to figure out how this whole thing began. They write the beginning of the story. (5 minutes)

14. After this, they turn the paper over, read the name of the original writer and return their paper.

Now, the original writer has two complete stories. They can read what was written, but they don't necessarily have any idea who wrote what!

### **I have some rules -**

1. You can't kill your character - That is the easiest thing to do. I call that lazy writing with the kids. They must figure out some way to deal with the chaos they write into these character's lives.

2. Don't put anyone in this class or anyone you know in these stories - This is to prevent bullying or embarrassing someone.

When I told them at the beginning of class that we were going to write, they groaned. I expected that I might get one or two kids who absolutely refused to write anything.

The teacher was expecting that some of the kids would not write anything.

All of them wrote. They wrote with enthusiasm! They wrote with gusto!

Some of them kept writing even after the five minutes ended. There was absolutely no way to tell that any of those kids hated writing.

One of the kids, a tall, athletic boy, started his story by writing only one sentence. He dropped his pencil like a mic drop, folded his arms and stared at me in defiance. When I collected the papers and redistributed them, he was surprised.

"Man, I feel sorry for whoever got my paper," he muttered.

Half way through the exercise he said aloud, "Come on, people! Try to be creative! I hope whoever has my paper is trying to come up with something good!"

One of the boys who had come in with his hood up and tried to actively look like he didn't care what was happening said, "I can't wait to get my paper back."

Everybody wrote.

When the kids got their papers back, they loved reading them.

Some were annoyed at what people had done to their characters.

All of them were amazed at the way people saw their characters.

Some were annoyed because the story veered into love story or sadness or sci fi!

All of them loved it.

The teacher was amazed everyone wrote.

Some of the students didn't speak English, and they had interpreters, and they wrote their stories in Spanish and traded papers with others writing in Spanish.

It was quite a week.

I don't have the patience to be a teacher.

I salute teachers. Their job is difficult, they don't get paid enough, and they are under appreciated!

*Continued next page*

I do like helping kids realize they might actually enjoy writing.

That I can do!

Happy Writing!

*Donna Washington has been a professional storyteller for over twenty years. She uses an expressive face and vocal pyrotechnics to bring stories to life. She has been featured at national festivals around the country. Donna's seven CDs have garnered over fifteen awards from Gold Parent's Choice Awards to Children's Music Web Awards. Her website: <https://dlwstoryteller.com>*

<https://donnawashingtonstoryteller.blogspot.com/2016/11/play-is-best-way-using-language-games.html>

## **BRAIN TEASERS**

### **WHAT MADE ANCIENT GREEKS SPECIAL?**

**See "Wake Forest Magazine" for answers.**

<https://magazine.wfu.edu/2018/03/28/lessons-from-the-greeks-and-romans-2/>

### **WHO ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN ANCIENT GREECE?**

I was captivated when my recent curiosity led me to the following research tool:

### **INTERNET ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY**

<https://iep.utm.edu/plato/>

Another surprise came when I asked:

### **WHAT DID SOCRATES WRITE?**

Answer: Nothing

Refer again to the **Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy**

<https://iep.utm.edu/>

## **NOTICE**

**North Carolina Storytelling Guild members whose articles are published in the Guild's JOURNAL OF TAR HEEL TELLERS may be used in Guild promotions.**

### ***Accepting Articles***

Articles, stories, and storytelling news are needed for NCSG's Fall 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 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 get posted on NCSG's website 'Events' page.

**Deadline:** November 15, 2023

Send to: [sylviapay98@gmail.com](mailto:sylviapay98@gmail.com).