

## *in the Wind*

*Seattle Storytellers' Guild Winter 1988, Vol. IX, #1*

### **Second Sunday Back at the Boiserie!**

by Sue Grizzell

Many of you remember Sunday storytelling at the Boiserie -that wonderful coffeehouse at the Burke Museum on the UW campus. Some of you remember that eight months ago, we "lost our lease" at the Bois and moved to the University Friend's Center.

As 1988 begins, Second Sunday Storytelling is transformed again. For the next three months, Second Sunday will be a series of special story concerts by some of the area's finest tellers. Joyfully, all three events will be presented in our old friend, the Boiserie!

**At the Boiserie - A Storytelling Concert Series** opens January 10th with a few of Seattle's best -Gene Friese, Debra Branham-Harris, Donald Braid and Seattle Sass (the Sharon Creeden and Pat Peterson duo).

In February, Merna Hecht and Naomi Baltuck will present to us a Valentine of love stories on the 14th.

And there's a truly special night on March 13th when Vi Hilbert, Rebecca Chamberlain and Johnny Moses will tell Native American stories from the peoples of the Puget Sound.

The structure of these evenings is new and different. There's no more open mike. Rest assured,

however, that the open mike has not disappeared. It's just been moved (see adjoining article). Admission for each Sunday evening concert is \$5. For the first time, you can buy a series ticket, good for all three concerts, for only \$12. While seating is limited, there's plenty of free parking. For information or reservations, call 527-2341.

How better to pass the hours of a cold winter's night, enjoying the hot cocoa or coffee and baked treats, meeting old friends and new, all the while, warming ourselves with story after story? Please come and renew your acquaintance with the Boiserie, and if you've never been there, let us introduce you to a very cozy old friend.

### **Announcing . . . Open Mike at Honey Bear Bakery**

by Mary O'Leary

A wonderful new opportunity to treat your imagination! Come to the Honey Bear to listen to some of your favorite Northwest storytellers. Or, better yet, come tell a story yourself. Bring your friends and family! Admission is free for everyone!

Our new open mike storytelling hour will take place from 3-4 pm. on the **third Sunday** of each month, beginning in February. Upcoming dates are: **February 21st, March 20th and April 17th.**

The Honey Bear Bakery is located in Seattle's Greenlake area, on the corner of North 55th Street and Meridian Avenue (10 blocks north of the Guild 45th movie theatre). Fresh and delicious bakery fare is available for all who want to purchase these marvelous treats.

The co-coordinators of this new event are Board members Mary O'Leary, 325-6597, and Sue Grizzell, 523-6919. Call one of them if you have questions.

### **Calling all Volunteers**

Are you a whiz at balancing the books? Have you ever used Microsoft EXCEL to do it? Or, do you have a yearning to meet famous media stars and write for a newspaper?

If either of these ideas tickles your fancy, you may be just the volunteer the Seattle Storytellers' Guild is searching for. We need a Treasurer and a Publicity Director to join the Board. Don't hesitate. Call **Janice Dahl**, Volunteer Coordinator, at 523-8591. Now.





## They say...

Once there was a stranger in New York City rushing about frantically, because he was lost. He stopped a man who was also rushing (but that was just because the second fellow was a New Yorker). The stranger asked, "Please, help me. How do I get to Carnegie Hall?"

"Practice," replied the New Yorker, "practice, practice." (old joke)

"Tell the story to someone as if it were the juiciest piece of gossip you've ever heard. The story will yield itself up and tell itself through you." (Laura Simms, National Storytelling Conference, 6/86)



## Call Us for Answers:

**Suellen Adams**, Director & Pres., 361-9098

**Naomi Baltuck**, Membership Activities Director, 525-2560

**Donald Braid**, Program Development Director, 527-2341

**Sharon Creeden**, Folklife & other storytellers-required activities, membership & mailing lists, 935-2856

**Janice Dahl**, Volunteer Coordinator, 523-8591

**Gene Friese**, Grants writer, 284-9469

**Clare Graham**, Editor, In the Wind, 325-9409

**Sue Grizzel**, Special Events, Mailings, 523-6919

**Mary Mercer**, VP, Memberships, 283-7378

**Mary O'Leary**, Coordinator, Open Mike, 325-6597

**Eugene Vernon**, Legal Advisor, 874-2546

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: \_\_\_\_\_ Individual, \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Family, \$15

\_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Institutional, \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ Donor, \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Liar, \$49.95

\_\_\_\_\_ Fairy godparent (lifetime), \$100

\_\_\_\_\_ Muse (be creative & generous), \$\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in volunteering. Please call me to discuss how I may help.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please include my name on mailing lists for related events.

Mail to: *Seattle Storytellers' Guild*

*1921 Taylor Ave. N. #5*

*Seattle, Washington 98109*

*In the Wind* is the newsletter of the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, a non-profit organization, and is published quarterly (January, April, July, and October). Membership in the Guild includes a year's subscription. PLEASE CHECK EXPIRATION DATE ON YOUR LABEL.

**DEADLINE FOR THE APRIL-JUNE NEWSLETTER IS MARCH 15.** Articles & queries should be sent to the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, P.O. Box 45532, Seattle 98145-0532.

***Seattle Storytellers' Guild***

***P.O. Box 45532***

***Seattle, Washington 98145-0532***





## notes from the Netherlands

by Cathryn Wellner

The North Sea winter closes around us here. If tales are born on the wind, I will learn hundreds of new ones before tulip season. After ten days of storm winds, the sudden silence can be uncanny.

Dutch friends assured me there was little folklore in the Netherlands, and of storytellers they had heard not a word. But you know how it is. People find what they are looking for. A few observations on both:

Thirty years ago Ate Doornbos, a young Dutch scholar, went in search of Dutch ballads and folklore. "Waste of time!" his colleagues said. "That all died out long ago."

Undeterred, Professor Doornbos began "Onder de groene linden" (Under the Green Linden), a weekly program on Radio Nederland. A few songs, a few stories, and an appeal to the listeners. "Does anyone remember the old ballads and tales?" Thirty years and some ten thousand songs later, a treasure which was being buried by mass culture has been preserved. In records and now in a planned series of books, the rich heritage of Dutch folklore will be in a form where it can be rediscovered as storytellers and folk musicians turn to their own roots.

That turning still lies in the future. The small but vibrant storytelling movement is finding inspiration in world folklore beyond its own borders. Folk music clubs, active throughout the Netherlands, concentrate primarily on music from the English-speaking world. And so Dutch tales and songs slip from living memory as their keepers age and die. Still, in no small measure thanks to Prof. Doornbos, the lore may sleep but will still breathe until the kiss of the live performer awakens it again.

As to the storytelling movement, though small it is very much alive and searching for ways to reach a wider audience. The lecture at which I met Dr. Doornbos was part of a series of performances and lectures sponsored by the Amsterdam storytellers. A very energetic organizer, Anne van Delft, has been the driving force behind the national festival. Announced for the third year in a row in 1986, it attracted 40 tellers from around the country plus a growing audience for performances and workshops.

The holidays will be past when you read this, but there is one bit of folklore from the Dutch Christmas season I'd like to share with you. About mid-November the junk mail (yes, here too!) started carrying pictures of people in blackface advertising toys and other goodies. I was startled and asked Jan Swagerman, a Dutch therapist and storyteller, what it was all about.

Sinterklaas lives in Spain, Jan told me, and is assisted by Black Peters, who probably stem from the Moors. Black Peter is the shadow side of the good Bishop. If children misbehave, he will pop them into his bag and carry them off the Spain for a year. If they are good and sing sweetly on Sinterklaas day (December 5th), Sinterklaas will hear them through the chimney and fill their shoes with goodies.

There is an active debate here as to whether Black Peters should be phased out because of racist connotations. Jan, who is familiar with but not enamored of the elves who help Santa Claus, thinks it would be too great a symbolic loss. For the myth to be complete, there must be opposing forces. Without shadow, there is no light.

And so it goes in the land of the windmills (many!) and wooden shoes (few, except in tourist shops).

## StoryspINNers of the Inland Northwest

by Susan Creed

More than a dozen storytelling enthusiasts in Spokane and other localities in the Inland Northwest have been meeting regularly now for over a year for informal story swapping. Calling ourselves the "StoryspINNers of the Inland Northwest," we have been meeting in members' homes and area libraries but have now settled on "Auntie's Bookstore and Cafe" in downtown Spokane as our regular meeting place. We meet the second Sunday of each month from 2-4 in the afternoon.

Now that we are an ongoing, viable group we are looking forward to sponsoring, or helping to sponsor, workshops and concerts. We'd love to hear from Seattle storytellers who are planning to be in our area for school visits, etc. We sometimes hear about your visits after you've come and gone.

So remember us when you're travelling over the mountains to the Inland Northwest. Contact Susan Creed, Secretary-treasurer, (509) 927-9379 or 926-4334

### Planning ahead ?

Is there anyone who did not receive a calendar for Christmas this year? If you didn't, call any of your friends and ask for one of their extras. Then block in the following dates in 1988:

**May 13-14** for the 11th Annual Storytelling Workshop at UW featuring Jane Yolen with "The Wonder and Magic of Story and Storytelling."

**June 16-19.** This year's NAPPS conference will be a unique and exciting event, and for the first time it will be in the West. Think Santa Fe! Its theme is "Ethnic Diversity: Implications for the Storyteller and the Storytelling Community."



# Can Teachers Live Happily Ever After?

## Storytelling In the Classroom

© 1987 Naomi Baltuck

Lewis Carroll once called stories "love gifts." Children understand this when we push back the desks for story time; they listen with shining eyes and open hearts. As storytellers, we bring joy and wonder. We draw people closer together. We give them a safe place to experience sadness and fear. We introduce them to new and exciting people and places and stretch their minds and their imaginations.

Many doors are opened when a child lets a story come in. Storyteller Ruth Sawyer said, "We touch the heart, that the head may understand." We have in storytelling a key which opens the doors to many disciplines. It can be used to teach creative writing, movement and dance, history, social studies, science and geography. We can use stories to develop listening skills, problem-solving and vocabulary.

But teachers should not need AN EXCUSE to tell a story. The most important benefits of storytelling in the classroom are not as easily measured as a grade point average, but are at least as valuable and will probably have a more lasting effect. I was fortunate enough to have "discovered" storytelling eight years ago, while I was still teaching in a classroom. I introduced many children to storytelling for the first time and was then able to see "the before and after pictures" of what storytelling can do.

I wished that every morning I could have had each child climb up into my lap for just ten minutes of

my undivided attention. Yet with so many children and all the demands and constraints of maintaining a classroom and following a required curriculum, it is impossible for a teacher to spend as much quality time with each child as she needs to.

But storytelling helps build bridges and fill in the gaps. I realized that when I was sharing a story with my class, each child felt that I was bestowing that "love gift" upon her alone. Relationships changed. A fertile atmosphere was created in which trust and affection were nurtured in both the storyteller and her listeners.

Although I was new to storytelling, my stories were received in the spirit in which they were given. I took more risks, experimenting with stories and telling styles. Instead of working fast and furiously to perfect a story to tell at school, I began to "polish up" stories by telling them "rough" and then asking the children for suggestions. As the school year progressed, so did we all. My skills and repertoire grew and their listening skills developed to where my kindergarteners would hear one story a half an hour long and then ask for another. They began to write and tell their own stories.

All stories do not have to be carefully researched and memorized; we all have stories on the tip of our tongues. Every one of us has a wealth of personal experience to draw upon. I discovered this after I had been sharing traditional fairy and folk tales on a regular basis. One day, during our kindergarten "choice time," when we split up into smaller activity groups, I was reminded of a funny incident that occurred in my childhood. I said to my small group, "When I was a kid. . ." and then I became aware that the entire room had grown quiet as children in the other small groups were bending an ear to hear my "story."

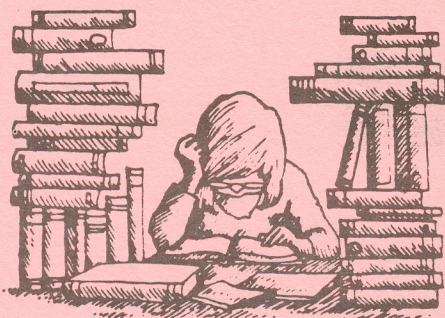
The children helped me realize that stories are everywhere and any time can be story time. The little memories that "bob up" in the course of our daily activities could be shaped into personal stories and shared with others. These personal stories were the ones that helped me understand how important a teacher actually is in the lives of her students. What we say or do, what we are willing to share with our children can have a profound impact on their lives. By sharing the stories of our own hopes, dreams, fears, we can help children understand that we are all only human.

Stories of my childhood were asked for repeatedly. Once, just off the top of my head, I told my pupils a story about the time I was locked out of the house and accidentally left behind in the back yard, while my parents and siblings drove off to a party without me. I simply described the sadness and loneliness and then the joy I felt to see my mother, looking sufficiently repentant, rushing up the driveway to scoop me into her outstretched arms. All was forgiven, now that I realized my mother did love me after all!

After school one day, there was a knocking on my classroom door. It was a former pupil who had transferred to another school more than two years before. I remembered him as an angry child who had never gotten over the feeling of being displaced by a younger brother. He greeted me by saying, "Could you tell me that story about the time you got left behind?"

Whether you begin your stories with "Once upon a time. . ." or "When I was a kid. . ." these stories are truly given and will be accepted as gifts of love. I cannot promise that, with the telling of a story, your classroom will live happily ever after. But it will never be the same.





## Sources

### about stories and the folks who tell them

by Margaret Read MacDonald

Aztec legends reset in modern day New Mexico? A series of stories which happen to include Coyote restructured to create a "coyote cycle" of tales?

As a folklorist I gasp in horror at such tactics. But as a fun loving children's librarian I jump with delight at John Bierhorst's new folktale collection Doctor Coyote: A Native American Aesop's Fables (New York: MacMillan, 1987). Bierhorst has drawn his tales from an Aztec manuscript in the National Library of Mexico. They are apparently retellings by the Aztecs of a Spanish rendition of Aesop. Coyote and Pums are given major roles in the Aztec retellings and Bierhorst explains that he has given Coyote an even larger role in his restructuring. He has managed to make the tales seem like one continuous saga of Doctor Coyote's misadventures and it works very well. Illustrator Wendy Watson chose to set the tales in modern day New Mexico! And THAT works very well! The book is delightful. Just keep in mind when using it that these are not New Mexican Coyote stories . . . this is an Aztec Coyote. What confusion. But it's so good you'll have to use it anyway.

Since the NAPPS Conference is being held in Santa Fe this year, let's take a look at some other Southwest titles you might like to examine before heading for New Mexico.

I have always loved Gerald Hausmann's Sitting on the Blue Eyed Bear: Navaho Myths and Legends (Westport, Conn: Lawrence Hill, 1975). His brief tales are poetic, lovely. The introductory material about the Navaho helps set the tales in place. The tales were inspired by conversations with a Navaho friend during his college days in New Mexico. The book is beautiful but I am not in a position to assess its authenticity. Hausmann says that "These are the stories and poems which I heard, found, borrowed, remade or created myself."

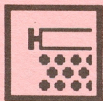
For the storyteller or story reader Harold Courlander's People of the Short Blue Corn: Tales and Legends of the Hopi Indians (New York: Harcourt, 1970) is a useful collection. As usual, Courlander writes concisely and well. He includes notes about each tale to aid our understanding. Most of the stories were collected by Courlander himself. His style usually involves slight retelling, but can be expected to remain basically true to his sources.

To examine texts recorded exactly as they were spoken by Native American tellers, see Dennis Tedlock's Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians (University of Nebraska, 1978, paperback \$6.95) Tedlock's ethnopoetic format allows us to raise and lower our voices with the teller and pause when s/he pauses. A groundbreaking book in the ethnographer's attempts to put oral literature down on paper. And some very good tales. Don't miss this one.

So far I have only glanced at Barbara Babcock's new book The Pueblo Storyteller: Development of a Figurative Ceramic Tradition (University of Arizona Press, 1986, \$40). It is a handsome book to browse and I'm sure the author's scholarly examination will be fascinating reading. These storytelling dolls are everywhere in Santa Fe and cost a bundle. After reading Babcock's book you probably won't be able to resist buying one.

Last of all, here's a "museum review." No storyteller visiting Santa Fe should miss the Museum of International Folk Art with its exciting Girard Foundation Collection exhibit "Multiple Visions: A Common Bond." This incredible collection of folk art is arranged in a series of "small world" tableaus that invite hours of feasting with the eyes. Allow plenty of time to let your imagination wander in this remarkable exhibit. The child in you will want to linger forever.





## Editor's Note

I happened to wander into the downtown branch of the Seattle Public Library the other day and ended up chatting with **Ruth Webb** in the Video department. She and I were checking the shelves, reading the microfiche and searching the computer and catalogues for films and videotapes of storytellers. There are lots of stories on film or video -but most are dramatic adaptations or cartoons.

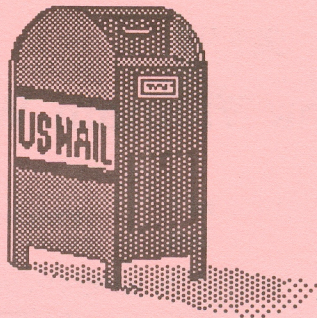
We did find a few storytellers. The Library does have 6 of the 8 American Storytelling Series and the Henry Branch carries a video of Jay O'Callahan telling six stories. There's a film of Michael Parent's stories and Ruth will graciously direct you to the King County Library at 300 8th Avenue North, to find Jackie Torrence videos.

If you want to check out videos at the Library, you'll need a library card. You can't really reserve a video, but if you telephone in advance, the librarian will hold your request for that day. Or you can take your chances. The storytelling videos aren't catalogued on the shelves alphabetically but they are found on the cart that includes children's videos and features. You can keep a video for 2 days only.

I checked out 2 of the American Storytelling series videos and excitedly brought them home to view in the comfort of my living room. I liked them, sort of. I liked being able to see storytellers I'd heard about but hadn't heard. It was good to see and hear them in action. But something was missing. Those videos made me realize once again that a storyteller doesn't do it alone. When there's no audience interacting with the storyteller, there's only silence in the spaces where the laughter, the gasps, the holding of breath is supposed to happen -where the magic flows. Yes, the magic takes two.

Clare Graham

*In the Wind 6*



ANNOUNCING A NEW ADDRESS:  
SEATTLE STORYTELLERS' GUILD  
POST OFFICE BOX 45532  
Seattle, WA 98145-0532

Send everything except Membership Forms to our new P.O. Box. Membership correspondence still goes to 1921 Taylor Ave. N. #5, Seattle, WA 98109

## "... On the Air"

Airing for the first time on January 9 is NPR's *Good Evening*, hosted by Noah Adams of *All things Considered*. *Good Evening* is a musical variety show which will periodically host storytellers. Coming up:

Jay O'Callahan on January 23,  
Donald Davis on January 30, and  
Syd Lieberman on February 13.

The show airs on Saturdays at 5 p. m. Check local listing for your public radio station as broadcast times may vary slightly.

## American Storytelling Video Series

The American Storytelling series presents 21 stories told by some of America's finest storytellers, performers who make their tales come alive in the telling. Myths and legends, folk tales and fairy tales, literary classics and personal reminiscences, these stories from around the world can entertain and enrich audiences of all ages. Each volume in the series is introduced by storyteller David Holt.

Volume One (found at the Downtown and Henry Branches) contains *How the Whale Got His Throat*, the lively Kipling classic about what happens when the whale swallows a resourceful mariner told by Jackson Gillman; Gayle Ross telling *Mosquitoes*, a Cree Indian legend about the origin of one of man's worst pests; and *Why the Dog Has a Cold Wet Nose*, a unique version by Maggie Peirce from Northern Ireland of the Noah's ark story in which Noah changes his opinion of a certain animal.

### Volume Two

Downtown and Henry Branches  
Ron Evans

*Why the Leaves Change Color*  
Diane Wolkstein *White Wave*

### Volume Three

Heather Forest  
Lynn Rubright  
Laura Simms

*Arachne*  
*Baked Potatoes*  
*The Woodcutter*

### Volume Four

Jon Spelman  
Chuck Larkin

*Grass Cape*  
*Mr. Bass*

### Volume Five

Rainier and Henry Branches  
David Holt

*Barney McCabe*

Barbara Freeman  
& Connie Regan-Blake

*No News*

Mary Carter Smith

*Cindy Ellie*

### Volume Six

D. Truth and Henry Branches

Ed Stivender

*Hansel and Gretel*

Brother Blue

*Miss Wunderlic*

Jay O'Callahan

*Frogs, Dodge City*

### Volume Seven

Elizabeth Ellis

Henry Branch

Carol Birch

*The Peddler*

Michael Parent

*Tayzanne*  
*Charlie Pinch Hits*

### Volume Eight

Donal Davis

Henry Branch

Marcia Lane

*The Crack of Dawn*

*The Twelve Huntsmen*

For information, write the H.W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, Bronx, NY 10452, or call toll free 1-800-367-6770



## Calendar

### JANUARY

- 10 At the Bois** presents some of Seattle's Finest storytellers: Gene Friese, Debra Branham-Harris, Donald Braid and Seattle Sass. Doors open at 6:30 pm, program at 7. Boiserie coffeehouse, Burke Museum, UW campus, NE 45th & 17th NE (free parking). \$5, 527-2341.
- 21 Board Meeting** (Visitors welcome), 7pm, 7467 1/2 Woodlawn Ave NE, 527-2341
- 28 Story 'n' Snack.** Potluck dessert and story swap. Bring a story and a snack. 846 NE 98th St. 7:30 p.m. For more info, call Naomi Baltuck or Thom Garrard, 525-2560.

### FEBRUARY

- 13 Naomi Baltuck** tells stories at the Ellensburg Public Library. 3 pm.
- 14 At the Bois** presents Love stories for Valentines' Day. Featured will be Merna Hecht and Naomi Baltuck. Doors open at 6:30 pm, program at 7. Boiserie coffeehouse, Burke Museum, UW campus, NE 45th & 17th NE (free parking). \$5, 527-2341.
- 18 Board Meeting** (Visitors welcome), 7pm., 7467 1/2 Woodlawn Ave. NE, 527-2341
- 21 Honey Bear Bakery Open Mike** 3-4 pm. 55th and Meridian near Greenlake.
- 25 Story 'n' Snack.** Potluck dessert and story swap. Bring a story and a snack. 846 NE 98th St. 7:30 p.m. For more info, call Naomi Baltuck or Thom Garrard, 525-2560.

### MARCH

- 14 At the Boiserie** presents a special program of Native American stories with Vi Hilbert, Rebecca Chamberlain and Johnny Moses. Doors open at 6:30pm, program at 7. Boiserie coffeehouse, Burke Museum, UW campus, NE 45th & 17th NE (free parking). \$5, 527-2341.
- 20 Honey Bear Bakery Open Mike** 3-4 pm. 55th and Meridian near Greenlake.
- 24 Board Meeting** (Visitors welcome), 7pm., 7467 1/2 Woodlawn Ave. NE, 527-2341

## Classes

**The Story Circle**, taught by **Naomi Baltuck**. Whether spinning a traditional yarn or telling from your own personal experience, there is joy in the sharing of a story. Would you like to know what makes a story work? When and where to tell a story? How to choose, learn and tell a story? Add spice to your life at home, on the job, and person-to-person by recognizing and bringing forth the storyteller in you. Northgate. Mondays, 7-9:30 pm. 2/1 and 2/15-29. \$25 instructor's fee, \$8 supply fee. Register through ASUW Experimental College, 543-4735.

**Storytelling for Educators**, taught by **Naomi Baltuck**. Acquaints participants with techniques, resources and uses of storytelling for the classroom. Assists in identifying and selecting good storytelling material, designing a plan for its use, and implementing the plan. Northgate. Wednesdays, 6-9 pm. 1/20-3/2. 2 credits, \$42. Additional \$45 course fee. Register for Ticket #5107, EDUC 5481, through Seattle Pacific University, Division of Continuing Studies, 281-2121.

**Storytelling: Art and Techniques**, taught by **Marjorie Kennedy**. A study of storytelling, past and present, noting its development as an art form. Reading and analyzing storytelling materials (folk literature and literary forms) used by storytellers throughout historical periods. Learning essential techniques necessary to maintain this artistic skill in a professional field. Planning storytelling programs for various age and interest groups and situations, utilizing folk, classic and contemporary literature. Register for LIBR 471TB EDP:C6850 3 credits; \$174 plus \$15 registration fee. To register at UW Extension call 543-2310. For more information, call Judith Frey, 543-2300, ext. 314.



# "Back to the World"

## An Oral History of the Vietnam War

by Bruce Wolcott

I returned to my parents' home in Michigan in November, 1970. I was 20 years old and had just served in Vietnam for almost 2 years as an Army medic. Winter had set in and I remember how breathlessly quiet it was, how peaceful and ordinary the snow covered mid-Michigan landscape. The anguish of Vietnam was as distant as Walter Cronkite's voice on the evening news reading daily casualty statistics from the war.

My parents, either out of consideration for my feelings or because they really didn't want to know, never asked me about my experiences in Vietnam. I found that generally true in the years that followed; Vietnam was an awkward and uncomfortable subject nobody talked about. My memories of the war in Southeast Asia were surrounded by emotional numbness and solitude.

Suddenly, through an unusual set of circumstances, I was recently asked to participate in a performance called "Back to the World." It consisted of six veterans reading accounts of their experiences in Vietnam. Besides myself, we were a perimeter guard, a dog handler, an Army journalist, a Navy gunner and a combat infantryman. The rehearsals for our performance involved some of the most moving storytelling I've ever experienced. Hearing and telling our stories created a strong bond between us and an emotional catharsis, unravelling the knots of silence built up over the years.

Some of the images from these stories will always stay with me: the high speed helicopter descent into a "hot" landing zone, the Viet Cong destruction of an Amer-Asian orphanage, the 24 hour bombardment of the Vietnamese coast by Navy guns so powerful their firing raised blisters on anyone standing too close on the deck, armed G.I.'s partying in a Saigon bar in the midst of the Tet offensive, ready to shoot American M.P.'s trying to clear them out, the aloof mirrored glass and metal Army headquarter buildings in Long Binh, looking like a reduced scale Houston skyline, waging war along the principles of modern corporate management.

After our performance at the Group Theatre, we ended the evenings in a rap session with the audience, which included many Vietnam vets. More stories emerged. A black vet in the audience talked about his bitterness fighting against communist oppression, when he experienced minority oppression at home. Someone else described the Vietnam conflict as a "class war," which the sons of the affluent and educated could avoid. Another vet wondered why some ex-soldiers still wore military paraphernalia after all these years, asking, "How long are you going to be caught up as victims of this war, before getting on with your lives? We're all survivors here, not victims." A tall pale man in his late thirties quietly sat in the back of the auditorium, battling cancer caused

by his exposure to Agent Orange. An ex-combat soldier saw his greatest challenge in Vietnam as the control of fear, an exercise of courage. The president of a local veterans' organization mentioned that 40-60% of Washington state's prison population consisted of men who served in Vietnam.

After several performances of "Back to the World," a holographic view of the Vietnam war became apparent to me. The complex weave of stories created an overall experience of an event that couldn't be accomplished any other way. I felt that after years of silence, these stories of Vietnam had finally managed to surface in a form of storytelling that was teaching, theater and therapy.

The stories also brought home another point to me: that the effects of war extend way beyond the battlefield. As one veteran, now a successful Seattle lawyer said, "If any politician decides to send men to war in the future, he'd better damn well know what he's getting into."

"It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it." -General Robert E. Lee