



in the Wind

Seattle Storytellers' Guild Fall 1989, Vol XII, Number 4

A Storytelling Workshop and Performance by Master Storyteller Bob Barton by Naomi Baltuck

I was one of several Seattle storytellers fortunate enough to take Bob Barton's workshop at the National Congress on Storytelling in St. Louis in 1987. Bob Barton was an officer for the Ministry of Education in Canada. He was a co-founder of the Storyteller's School of Toronto. He was the author of TELL ME ANOTHER, an excellent resource book for storytellers and educators. He was also a powerful and inspirational keynote speaker and workshop leader.

Back in Seattle, when those of us who attended compared observations on the Congress, we found that Bob Barton was one of the highlights for all of us.

The Seattle Storytellers' Guild is pleased to announce that we are bringing Bob Barton all the way from Toronto to present an evening of storytelling and a morning workshop. Both the workshop and performance will be

co-sponsored by the University of Washington's Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences.

Bob's evening performance, "Moonlight and Shadow", is a collection of stories for the season when days are getting shorter and nights are getting longer. Why not step in out of the rain, sit back and let a story work some moon magic? The performance will be on Friday, November 17 at 8:00 P.M. in Room 120 of Kane Hall on the University of Washington campus. Tickets are \$6. for general audience, \$5. for guild members.

In his workshop, "Making the Story Your Own", through discussions and participatory exercises, Bob will help you enhance your understanding of the enterprise and invention that go into the making of a story which, in turn, enlivens your telling and strengthens your performance. This is a great opportunity for storytellers at all levels, educators, and librarians to learn from a master storyteller and an expert education consultant. Space for this workshop is limited, so register early. The workshop will take place on the UW campus. Participant fee for the general public is \$30. and \$25. for S.S.G. members.

Call Naomi Baltuck, at 621-8646 to register or for more information.

Reflections on the 2nd Annual Festival

by Richard Wells

The 2nd Annual Northwest Storytelling Festival is now history. For those of us involved as tellers and listeners and doers, it is already a fond memory.

As Chairperson of the Festival Committee, I was most often asked two questions during the Festival: (1) "Aren't you exhausted?" and (2) "What is your assessment of the Festival"? The answer to the first question was always an honest "Yes!" - but it was the exhaustion of a labor of love. The answer to the other question also deserved and received an honest answer - one I would like all of you to hear.

Qualitatively, the Festival was a resounding success! During the Festival I was in and out of all the concerts and workshops and the swapping ground. I sat or stood in the midst of the goings-on, sometimes as an active listener to the tellers and other times as a keen observer of the audience.

As an active listener, I heard a delightfully diverse array of talented tellers: the dynamic duo, Seattle Sass; the poised performer, Cathryn Wellner; the mover and shaker, Peter Vallance; and the improvisational Joel ben Izzy. (I have kept for future festivals the "Joel ben Izzy Memorial Bee Sting Remedy"). I also saw Vi Hilbert stand erect and proud before me. And I saw Swede Miller sit slouchily on the stool, but just as proud.

As a keen observer, I witnessed the rapt attentiveness of the audiences and their responsiveness to the stories being told. And - oh, the powerful human emotions I felt as the

audience became involved with their hearts not just their ears and eyes! Tellers and listeners alike approached me to express their gratitude for the shared experience. Prefacing his performance Saturday evening, Joel (bee sting) ben Izzy remarked that the Festival-goers were an involved audience and that the Festival organization was seamless and flawless.

You volunteers in all your capacities have my appreciation for making the festival organization and organizer (me) look so good! From Ron Vernon, who took the initiative to head the publicity committee; to Martha Smith, who took on the "A-to-Z" tasks from grant writing to printing tickets, programs and T-shirts; to sound and lighting technician Riku Smith; to emcees, stage managers, ushers, ticket-takers...to all who had a role in the Festival. I know your names and sing your praises (in the shower).

So you have my honest qualitative assessment of the Festival. My honest quantitative assessment is that the Festival fell short of my expectations. We enjoyed the company of approximately 130 people both Friday and Saturday evenings and 70 during the day Saturday. I had expected about 200+ both evenings and 150 during the day. Because we fell short of attendees, we have also fallen short of breaking even financially. (But don't worry-we didn't break the bank, either.) I was glad for those who did attend - and felt like sending "Wish You Were Here" postcards to those not present.

Next year is the 3rd Annual Festival. (I've always been told the 3rd time is the charm!) I invite your Festival Feedback - including your constructive criticisms. And I invite your helping hands.

On the Festival Committee

Our festival committee survived . . . and produced the 2nd Annual Northwest Storytelling Festival. Our thanks go to the many volunteers who made the festival possible, especially:

Richard Wells - Richard is a rapid raiser going from usher last year to committee chairman this year. An accountant by day, he brings excellent managerial skills to the committee. As a storyteller, he can be heard on KBCS.

Pat Peterson - Pat is co-coordinator and often emcee of the first and third Friday performances at the Boiserie. She is an active storyteller both individually and as half of Seattle Sass. Her tales of cats are true - a pride of cats share their house with her.

Debra Harris-Branham - Debra is another "instant success" story, going from featured teller at last year's festival to committee member this year. She is a school librarian and professional storyteller. Her "kids" claim Debra thinks every new story is "the greatest story".

Bruce Wolcott - Bruce is a liar and an oxymoron and proud of it. As a liar, he has won the Folklife Liar's Contest. In improvisational theater, he is a member of Theater Sports' Oxymoron - another winner.

Donald Braid - This former Guild Board president left town before the performance. He is currently a graduate student in the folklore department at Indiana. His expertise in producing last year's festival made this year's possible.

Sue Grizzell - Another former Board member, Sue returned Seattle for the festival.

She also brought expertise from last year's festival, especially regarding poster production.

Board members on the festival committee included Margaret Read MacDonald, Martha Smith and Ron Vernon. Ron coordinated publicity with the assistance of volunteer Camille Wooden. Martha wrote the grant and volunteered her son, Riku, for the technical production - sound and lights - of the festival. Margaret handled resources for the second year.

Numerous volunteers' labor made the festival a success. It is not too early for you to volunteer for the 1990 festival. Call 621-8646 and join "the winning team".



Sources about stories and the folks who tell them

by Margaret Read MacDonald,
King County Library System

My suggested reading this month is more about the "folks who tell" than the stories. A few anthropologists have decided to break with the traditional scientific monograph and report on their research as autobiography. This gives the reader an intriguing glimpse of life inside another

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Calendar

October 18 NAOMI BALTUCK will be celebrating the centennial with stories from "THE LAND OF OUR HEARTS' DESIRE". 7:30 P.M. Federal Way Library. Recommended for adults and children seven and up. For more information, call 839-0211.

October 20 AT THE BOISERIE Dayton Edmonds, a member of the Caddo tribe in Oklahoma, is a storyteller and a Methodist minister. He will be telling stories and singing songs at the Burke Museum coffeehouse on the University of Washington campus. Program begins with an open mike at 7:00 P.M. For more information, call 621-8646.

October 21 NAOMI BALTUCK tells stories and songs from around the world. 1 P.M. University Bookstore. Free. For more information, call 634-3400.

October 26 STORY 'N' SNACK
Story "N" Snack has a new home. Join us for a Potluck dessert and story swap. Bring a scary story and a treat. 7:30 P.M. 5725 - 58th NE. Call Cherie Trebon at 525-0382.

Special Note To Story 'N' Snackers!
November and December Story 'N' Snacks will be moved from the last Thursday of those months and combined into one Nov-Dec meeting.

October 28 SPENCER SHAW tells stories at the University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 1:00- 2:00 p.m. For more information, call 634-3400.

November 2 NAOMI BALTUCK will tell pioneer stories from "THE LAND OF OUR HEARTS' DESIRE" at the Mercer Island Library. 7:00 P.M. Free. Recommended for adults and children age seven and up. For more information, call 236-3537.

November 3 AT THE BOISERIE Ted Stone is a writer and storyteller who lives on Salt Spring Island off the coast of British Columbia. He is the author of "It's Hardly Worth Tellin' If You're Goin' To Tell The Truth". 7:00 P.M. Free. Program begins with an open mike. Burke Museum Coffeehouse, U of W campus. For more information, call 621-8646. Recommended for adults and children over ten.

November 11 SPENCER SHAW tells stories at the University Book Store, 1-2 p.m. For more information, call, 634-3400.

November 15 At the University Book Store, author, **Demi**, will be featured from 4 - 6 p.m. For more information, call, 634-3400.

November 17 AT THE BOISERIE "Once in a Blue Moon". Clare Graham will tell Coyote stories, Raven stories, and stories about our sister Moon. 7:00 P.M. at the Burke Museum. Recommended for adults. For more information, call 525-2560.

Sources, continued...

culture. And since storytelling is one of the things going on in these cultures, I am stretching this column to include two of these ethnographic autobiographies.

THE LAST NAVIGATOR by Stephen D. Thomas (Henry Holt, 1987) takes us to the Micronesian island of Satawal, where navigator Pailug slowly divulges the secrets of navigation by the stars. Several stories and chants are woven into Thomas's story, but most important for us is the sense of tradition which pervades Thomas's enquiry. There is tragedy in the realization that Pailug and other elders share their secret knowledge with the young American only because no one from the island wants to learn. It becomes clear that Pailug and his peers cannot perform a complete life unless they are able to pass the knowledge learned from their grandfathers on to another generation. "But now, when we sit in the canoe house to drink, the young men just want to sing and make jokes. Now, you see, there are many young men and just a few old ones. We drink for a time and the old men say, 'Now we will talk of navigation.' And the young men say, 'Oh, why are we going to tell those stories? Now we want to sing and laugh. For now we are drunk!' And the old men just nod. After this happens two or three times, they never bring it up again."

To enter a quite different culture sample Michael Jackson's **BARAWA AND THE WAYS BIRDS FLY IN THE SKY: AN ETHNOLOGICAL NOVEL**. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986).

This New Zealand anthropologist has done fieldwork in Sierra Leon intermittently since 1969. His book uses autobiography, poetry, ethnographic detail and a novelistic tracing of one family's saga to take us inside the life of a Kuranko village. For more detail on Karanko narrative you can see his **ALLEGORIES OF THE WILDERNESS: ETHIC AND AMBIGUITY IN KURANKO NARRATIVES**. (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1982).

Last of all I want to announce a special treat for Washingtonians. After six years of research, Jens Lund, our Washington State Folklorist, has completed **FOLK ARTS OF WASHINGTON STATE: A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY FOLK ARTS AND ARTISTS IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON**. (Tumwater: Washington State Folklife Council, 1989). This 108 page compendium of photographs and commentary gives us a fine overview of the folk arts in our state. Hmong embroidery, seed collage, furniture making, chainsaw carving, even muffler art! Available for \$14.95 plus \$1.16 tax from the Washington State Folklife Council, 7510 Armstrong St., Tumwater, WA 98501 (enclose \$2 for postage).

GUILD LIBRARY TO RELOCATE

The Guild library of books and tapes has moved from Naomi Baltuck's house to the home of Pat Peterson. In late October Pat and Cherie Trebon will inventory the contents of the library and compile a computer print out of books and tapes. Pat lives in West Seattle and will gladly provide directions. Give her a call at 935-5308.

November 17 "MOONLIGHT AND SHADOWS". Canadian storyteller, author, and educator Bob Barton will be telling stories in keeping with the season. 8:00 P.M. , Room 120 Kane Hall on the University of Washington campus. \$6.00 general admission, \$5.00 S.S.G. members. For more information or to reserve tickets, call 525-2560.

November 18 A WORKSHOP WITH BOB BARTON, author of one of the finest storytelling resource books, TELL ME ANOTHER will conduct a workshop on the University of Washington campus. Learn how to re-shape stories and make them your own. Space is limited, so register early! Saturday, 9:00 - 12 noon. \$30 for the general public, \$25 for S.S.G. members. For more information or to register, call 525-2560.

November 18 CATHY SPAGNOLI AND BLIA XIONG will be at the University Book Store from 1-2 P.M. For more information, call 634-3400.

November 25 CHAITANIA will be at the University Book Store, from 1-2 P.M.

December 1 AT THE BOISERIE. Orville Johnson, musician, singer, songwriter will be singing both traditional and original stories at the Burke Museum coffeehouse. Program begins with an open mike at 7:00 P.M. For adults and children over ten. For more information, call 525-2560 or 935-5308.

December 7 STORY 'N' SNACK. 7:30 P.M. Potluck dessert and story swap. 5225 - 58th NE. For more information, call Cherie Trebon at 525-0382.

December 9 SPENCER SHAW will be at the University Book Store from 1 - 2 P.M. For more information, call, 634-3400.

December 15 AT THE BOISERIE. Some of Seattle's finest storytellers will help us celebrate the season with winter and holiday tales. 7:00 P.M. At the Burke Museum coffeehouse, U of W campus. For more information call 621-8646 or 935-5308.

If you are scheduling, teaching or performing at a storytelling event in January, February or March 1990, please send calendar information to In the Wind, P.O. Box 45532, Seattle, WA 98145-0532 before December 10. We need your help in compiling a comprehensive calendar.

Notes

Have you or a friend not been receiving "In the Wind"? Please let us know; we have had computer problems with our mailing list.

Some people may have been lost from the file. For the technically minded, our label program malfunctioned when run on the updated operating system. The list has been reconstructed but errors may remain. Please help us correct them.

**Seattle Storyteller's Guild
(206) 621-8646**

Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM

October

- 3 Cherie Trebon
- 10 Rod Winget
- 17 Joy Anderson
- 24 Rod Winget
- 31 Tom Galt

November

- 7 Carl Grant
- 14 Jenifer Thames
- 21 Eva Nixon
- 28 Aza Hadas

December

- 5 Gene Marckx
- 12 James Thiel
- 19 Rod Winget
- 26 Jan Dahl

If you are interested in telling stories on KCBS, contact Rod Winget at 789-0294. This is a good opportunity to gain experience.

Workshops

STORYTELLING WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS (and anyone else with a yen to spin a tale), taught by Cathryn Wellner. "Each One Tell One" is a workshop designed to introduce participants to the unmatched joys of sharing stories with children. A lively, practical afternoon that will send you off with a small repertoire of tales and the inspiration to learn (or even create) others. Secret Garden Children's Bookshop, 7900 E. Green Lake Dr. N., Seattle, WA 98103. Sunday, October 15, 1-5 p.m., \$18. For information or to register, call 524-4556.

COMMUNICATING WITH HUMOR, October 15, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Remember how "tuned in" you were the last time someone was really funny? Learn to harness that same power in business presentations, public speaking, and private conversations in a class that is both entertaining and informative. Students will learn how to develop personal "presence," timing, the knack of adlibbing, locating sources for humorist material and a host of comedy techniques. Taught by professional comedian Carl Grant, this workshop is offered through the Experimental College (course number 3411). Call 543-4375 for further information and how to register.

VISUAL ARTS IN EDUCATION - Peter Donaldson of the Teacher Institute for Arts Education at Youth Theatre Northwest will conduct a two day, 1 credit class on October 20 and 21. Located on Mercer Island, YTN is dedicated to using the arts as a holistic structure for teaching and learning. Workshop begins Friday, October 20 from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. and continues Saturday, October 21 from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, call 232-2202 or 526-8047.

STORYTELLING FOR EVERYONE, taught by Cathryn Wellner. From telling friends what happened last night, to making polished presentations, to exploring stories that are metaphors for our lives, we all tell stories every day, no two of us in the same way. In this course you will expand your storytelling skills in a safe atmosphere. Exercises to lessen inhibitions and stir creative energy will be

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combined with insight into how to prepare and tell stories. Learn how to use voice, body and imagination to explore the full range of human expression. Instructor is a professional storyteller and workshop leader. Monday, 7-9:30 p.m., October 23 - November 13. \$35 (UW students, \$25). Register through ASUW Experimental College, 543-4735.

TELL ME A STORY is the theme of the November 14 workshop in which Opera for Youth will bring together storytellers, opera composers and librettists. Together, they will explore the purposes and activities of storytellers and people who write children's operas and search for the roots of songs and stories, and expand the ways they can collaborate in the process of creating operas with composers. For further information, including reservation forms, please send requests to Emily Hammood, Opera for Youth, Inc., Box 82932, Tampa, FL 33682.

A WORKSHOP WITH BOB BARTON.

The author of "Tell Me Another" will help you learn how to reshape stories and make them your own. To be held Saturday, November 18, 9 a.m. to 12 noon on the University of Washington campus. \$30/\$25 S.S.G. members. Call 621-8646 to reserve workshop space.

DRAMA IN EDUCATION workshop will be taught by Kathie Vitz at the Youth Theatre Northwest on Mercer Island on November 17, from 5:00 - 8:30 p.m. and November 18, from 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Cost is \$75. /1 credit. Call 232-2202 or 526-8047.

STORYTELLING AND STORY DRAMA are the topics of a three credit immersion class offered this Winter Quarter by the Youth Theatre Northwest. Classes will be held on Wednesday evenings January 10 through March 14, 7 - 9:30 p.m. plus five hours observing children's classes at the Youth Theatre. Call 232-2202 or 526-8047.



NOTES

Storyfest Journeys offer unique travel opportunities to out-of-the-way places. Led by well-known storyteller Robert Bela Wilhelm and his business associate, Mary Jo Kelly, the journeys are to destinations steeped in stories, legends and history. Upcoming offerings: Pilgrimage to St. Francis's Italy, Medieval Hill Towns of Umbria, October 20-29; and Canterbury Tales, Pilgrimage Roads of East Anglia, Wessex and Kent, June 22 - July 1, 1990. For information contact Storyfest Journeys, 3901 Cathedral Ave., N.W., Washington D.C. 20016, (202)364-6143.



In time for Christmas: InsightOut Productions of Mill Valley, California, has just released **Slow-Time People In a Fast-Time World**, a cassette of original stories by Cathryn Wellner. Cassettes can be ordered by sending \$9.95 (plus \$1.50 shipping for one; \$.50 per copy for each additional) to Mind's-Eye Theatre, 1947 14th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98112.

Donald Braid Follows His Bliss by Naomi Baltuck

His official title was President of the Seattle Storytellers' Guild. But perhaps you know him as the mild-mannered storyteller who specialized in Scottish stories. Certainly you would recognize him as the emcee at the various guild-sponsored activities and performances. Many know him best as the quick-witted emcee/coordinator of the Annual Liar's Contest at the Northwest Folklife Festival each year, the one for whom no pun was too terrible to try out on that rowdy but appreciative crowd.

His name is Donald Braid and for (how many?) YEARS he has been one of the movers and shakers behind the scenes of the Seattle Storytellers' Guild. Like Sisyphus on the mountain, Donald has dedicated unimaginable time and energy to seemingly endless tasks: from organizing festivals and seminars to printing up tickets and posters to keeping the Guild archives to the awe-inspiring task of keeping the books balanced month after month, year after year.

Last August Donald left behind his secret identity as a university physicist to "follow his bliss" --- all the way to Indiana University to get his Ph.D. in folklore.

I know that I am not alone in wishing both Donald and Sue Grizzel happy trails and happy tales in their new home. May the winds of fate blow them back to the Emerald City some day.

The National Storytelling Congress by Cathryn Wellner

They say the third time is the charm. They?

The proverbial they, the all-knowing they, the always-was-right they. And they were right again, for the NAPPS Congress in Raleigh, North Carolina, was the best yet. The Congress began in St. Louis in 1987, traveled to Santa Fe in 1988, and moves to Minneapolis in 1990. Each year the discussion becomes more open, the community more congenial.

The co-hosts, Southern Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (who but tale tellers would intentionally give themselves such an acronym?), started us off with an evening that wandered from a signed version of "Stone Soup" to a sly retelling of "Tar Baby," with so much variety in between that we all left feeling proud to call ourselves storytellers.

Standing Ouations

There were many standing ovations in four days, all deserved. Jay O'Callahn received one, after an extraordinary performance of Peer Gynt, accompanied by the Raleigh Symphony members opened in wonder.

There were other outstanding performances. Chuck Davis and his African-American Dance Ensemble had even the staid and the shy performing their own improvisational village dances. Musicians in a group called Tales and Scales used instruments, bodies, and voices to tell the story of a family devoured by a giant potato. Actor John O'Neal recreated the role for which he has become renowned, that of storyteller Junebug Jabbo Jones.

Exploring Our Talents

In another setting, so much top-notch talent could be intimidating, but the Congress was not about worshipping from afar. Rather, it was about exploring the full measure of our own talents.

Storytelling Congress, continued

In her keynote talk on Friday morning, storyteller Heather Forest said that great artists are those who have developed a unique personal style. They have made intentional choices. She talked of the mysterious quality we call "stage presence." In order to have it, we must be fully present. It is an act of faith, trusting that we have inspiration.

There was plenty to inspire us. Flutist Bridget Muldoon of Tales and Scales began talking about her art by saying, "I recreate. I have recreation all the time." Steve Kent, who directs John O'Neal, said, "An empowered populace with the right stories is very hard to dominate." And Chuck Davis ended an impressive morning, spent in the company of true artists, with a poem: "Listen more often to things rather than to beings. Listen to the wind. It is the sobbing of the trees. It is the breath of our ancestors."

Beyond Performance

The Congress was not only about performance, of course. Educators, librarians, members of the healing professions, arts organizers, and freelance storytellers met in interest groups to talk about their concerns and then brought these back to the larger group. Twice there was story swapping until late into the night. We had a watermelon feed, an ice cream social, a dance, a North Carolina-style pig pickin'. We ate too much, slept too little, and talked non-stop.

Some moments will remain especially vivid. On the last night of the Congress, we left Peace College, a small, lovely campus in downtown Raleigh, and traveled out to Camp Durant. A near-solstice moon shone in a clear sky. Fireflies winked in the soft warmth of a southern night. We danced until

our bodies were drenched with sweat that wouldn't dry in the humid air.

At the break, I left the lodge with friends, wandering down the road to the lake. As we walked out of the circle of light and music, we heard a frog chorus that deepened as we drew nearer. We sat on the dock and sang. At the line, "Friends, we could make such sweet harmony," we were joined by a new band of frogs, as if the creatures of night had accepted us into their circle.

Yardstick for Success

We all have yardsticks for a conference's success. Mine is the closing, when the way in which people part tests the silken threads that have been spun, or not, from one heart to another. On our last morning, John O'Neal gave a fine performance, and then he and Steve Kent talked with the audience. We wrote our evaluations and sang "The Storytelling Ethos Blues" (which I'd written as a reminder that we need to keep our senses of humor as we discuss issues). The Northlands Storytelling Network linked this Congress to the next by adding a new verse.

We laughed together, talked about the Congress, and then sang. As Bill Harley led the first song, the group rose spontaneously to its feet and joined in a circle around the room. We stood silently when the song ended and then followed Steve Kent in "Bright Morning Star." We felt the silken threads and were reluctant to part until Ed Stivender led us in a smile-tugging round that used only the words, "National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling." We laughed; we hugged; we shed a few tears; we parted as friends.

Next year...you come too!

The Advantage of Being Foolish by Martha J. Eshelman-Smith

"Why did the little moron take a ladder to school?
He heard it was a high school."

"Why did the little moron throw a match out the
window?
To see a firefly."

(both from Simon J. Bronner's AMERICAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE). These little moron jokes are succinct examples of a stock character in folklore - the jester who, by taking words literally, keeps us from taking conventions too seriously.

This is the jester Tenali Rama who, when ordered never to show his face in court again, appears in court with a pot over his head. Tenali Rama became a jester through his impudence: earning a boon from the goddess Kali, he was offered wisdom or wealth. He laughingly snatched them both. Kali angrily cursed him to become a ridiculous jester (vivatakavi - a palindrome in the syllabic scripts of Southern India). Tenali Rama saw the palindrome as a boon - a double vision. Impressed by his wit, Kali promised him praise for his jests in court. (See David Dean Shulman's THE KING AND THE CLOWN IN SOUTH INDIAN MYTH AND POETRY). His is the jest that carries truth through reversal and wit.

It is this jester who keeps laws from becoming oppressive by changing the perspective - Birbal who, sentenced to die, chooses "old age" as the means of execution. Or Birbal who chooses that the five poorest men in the city set his punishment; they do at the ridiculously small sum of fifty rupees which to them is a fortune. Birbal whom the Emperor Akbar orders to bring the ten

greatest fools to court. When only eight fools are shown, Akbar demands an explanation. "There are ten," Birbal explains, "these eight plus you and I; you for issuing the order, I for obeying." (Examples from Lee Siegel's LAUGHING MATTERS: COMIC TRADITION IN INDIA and Eunice de Souza's ALL ABOUT BIRBAL). Because he mocks himself as well, Birbal is free to mock his ruler.

Equally adept at straddling the line between cultural expectations and chaos is Gopal, who counts the stars in the heaven as equal to the number of hairs on five sheep - and extracts a hefty fee for his effort. (See Edward C. Dimock's THE THIEF OF LOVE: BENGALI TALES FROM COURT AND VILLAGE).

The jest as a pointer to truth appears frequently in religious contexts, such as a Zen Master whose mistake - hearing "Buddha is mind" as "Buddha is grass shoes" (an understandable mistake in Korean) - leads to enlightenment. (See Stephen Mitchell's DROPPING ASHES ON THE BUDDHA.) The jest is recognized as double vision: the Master says: "Sometimes I take humor seriously and sometimes I take seriousness humorously. Either way it is irrelevant." (See Camden Benares's ZEN WITHOUT ZEN MASTERS.)

Better known than the Zen examples, are the Sufi examples which Massud Farzan introduces with a quote from Kierkegaard: "When I was young, I forgot to laugh. Later, when I opened my eyes and saw reality . . . I began to laugh and haven't stopped since" (from EITHER/OR quoted in ANOTHER WAY OF LAUGHTER). Farzan's collection includes such tales as "When the

continued on back page...

The Advantage of Being Foolish, continued...

Direction of Mecca is Unknown": "Someone asked a Sufi sage: 'Suppose I am traveling in the country where I come to a stream and I have to do ablutions. Which direction do I face while performing the ritual?' The sage replied: 'In the direction of your clothes, so that they won't be stolen.'"

Similar fools exist in Christian (Brother Juniper in TALES OF ST. FRANCIS by Murray Bodo) and Jewish sources (stories of Chelm in A TREASURY OF JEWISH FOLKLORE by Nathan Ausubel). They exist in purely oral cultures, often combined with a trickster or cultural hero, as in Coyote who dances all night with the bullrushes rather than admitting his exhaustion. (See Barry Lopez's GIVING BIRTH TO THUNDER, SLEEPING WITH HIS DAUGHTER.) They exist as reminders of resistance to change as in the wise men of Holmola drowning the sickle. (See Bowman and Bianco's TALES FROM A FINNISH TUPA.)

Recognizing the stock character of the jester and thus recognizing his tricks aids the teller and the listener in bridging the cultural gap inherent in jests that lampoon expectations. And we can learn not to take ourselves, or our culture, too seriously.

In the Wind is the newsletter of the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, a non-profit organization, and is published quarterly. Membership in the Guild includes a year's subscription. Please check expiration date on your label. Deadline for the January issue is Dec. 10.

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.

Call Us For Answers: 621-8646 S.S.G.

Naomi Baltuck, President, 525-2560

Gene Friese, Secretary, 284-9427

Clare Graham, Board Member, 325-9409

Ken Jackson, Youth Activities, 324-0071

Sally Porter Smith, Newsletter, 284-2315

Margaret Read MacDonald, V.P., Resources, 827-6430

Martha Smith, Grants writer, 522-0382

Cherie Trebon, Treasurer, 525-0382

Ron Vernon, Legal Adviser, 282-8851

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