



# in the Wind

Seattle Storytellers' Guild Spring 1989, Vol. XII, #2

## Festival 1989 is in the making

by Martha Smith

The Second Northwest Storytelling Festival is scheduled for September 22 and 23rd at Lakeside School. This year the festival will include a "Meet the Tellers" concert Friday night, workshops Saturday morning, a one hour children's concert Saturday afternoon, a swapping ground and performances by four featured tellers, and a final Saturday evening concert including featured and local tellers.

The Festival is produced by a committee of volunteers, chaired by Richard Wells. To make the festival a success, the Festival Committee needs two things from the Guild membership:

- attendance and
- volunteer support.

Volunteers are needed to coordinate and/or work in the following areas: concessions, ticket sales, resource sales, ticket takers, housing for out of town tellers, help with mailings, and others. If you are able to help in any way, please call Richard Wells at 236-2744 to volunteer. Volunteers will be invited to a special Sunday brunch with the Festival storytellers.

Applications to be a featured teller are currently available. Call Naomi Baltuck at 525-2560 or write the Guild at P.O. Box 45532, Seattle, WA 98145-0532 for an application. The four local tellers Saturday night will be chosen to honor those who have supported storytelling in the Seattle area.

## Storytellers' survey: Report from the Guild President

by Donald Braid

We thank you for your responses to our survey! Your responses and valuable suggestions will help to shape the future of the Guild.

The survey brought to my attention a number of questions and potential misunderstandings about the Guild which deserve answers. Perhaps the best place to begin is with a little background on the Guild's operations.

The Guild is entirely a volunteer organization. Everyone, including Board members and concert producers, donates their time and energies to Guild projects. As a result we are limited in the number of activities that we can produce. Additional volunteer help from the membership could help expand our activities. Unfortunately, we have been rather shy in requesting help.

The Guild is devoted to promoting storytelling through educating and enriching storytellers and producing events that allow the public a chance to experience the art. We try not to cross the fine line into the realm of promoting individual storytellers. Primarily this is to avoid conflicts in the organization. Firstly, in order to promote individuals, choices would have to be made as to tellers' abilities. Such a policy of rating tellers is not only difficult due to the wide range of styles which all have their validity, but more importantly, leads to a

competitive atmosphere which is not conducive to an open sharing among Guild members. Secondly, it is not reasonable to ask volunteers to devote their time to promoting someone else's career and financial success.

As a result of this policy the Guild does not act as a referral service for storytellers, nor are there any Guild sanctioned tellers. In response to the many requests that we do receive for tellers we are publishing a directory of all the available storytellers who responded to our public invitation.

### Library

Yes! the Guild does have a library! It is currently housed at Naomi Baltuck's house (846 NE 98th). The library contains a large number of books, records and tapes which may be checked out. Many of the tapes recorded by the Guild are in this library, but we are limited by the performer's control over their material. Some of the tapes may be checked out, some are in a non-circulating library and may be listened to but not checked out. Other tapes we do not have permission to place in the library. The library is currently accessible during Story N Snack. If you know of a location which would allow better access, please let us know.

*continued on page 2*



# From the President

continued from Page 1

## Ticket Prices

We would love to have ticket prices and workshop prices lower than they are already, but that is not realistic. The volunteer nature of the Guild already holds prices to a minimum. Admission prices are set so that we can recover the costs of producing an event. Through careful planning we typically break even or make a small profit on events. This profit is fed back into the production fund. A concert with a nationally known teller can cost from \$1500 - \$3000 to produce; a festival or weekend retreat from \$5000 to \$7000.

## Location of events

It is true that most of the Guild events are in mainland Seattle. This is largely because most of the people producing the events live in this area and it is far simpler to produce events in one's own neighborhood. It would be nice to see Story N Snack type events happening in other regions, but if that is going to happen a member in that region must volunteer to host the event. We will be happy to pass on advice from our experiences in running such an event and publicize the event in the newsletter. Producing other events, e.g. concerts and workshops in outlying locations or in multiple locations is at present beyond our capabilities.

## NAPPS

Many people were not aware of NAPPS (the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling). NAPPS is a national storytelling organization that each year produces a National Storytelling Festival, a "congress" and an "institute" of classes. They also publish the National Storytelling Journal, which contains articles

about many aspects of the art, the "Yarnspinner," a newsletter which contains calendar information from across the country, and a mail order catalog of resources. You can join NAPPS for \$25 a year. Their address is: PO Box 309, Jonesborough, TN 37659.

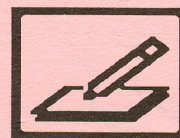
## Adult/Children storytelling

From the survey results you can see that respondents wanted to see a mix of both adult and children's storytelling -with an emphasis on the adult side. We have produced, and will continue to produce, events for family audiences (recognizing that any storytelling which can be enjoyed by children is also enjoyable to adults), but our tendency is to concentrate more on events which are geared for adults and older children. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, there are already many storytelling events for children happening outside the Guild, while it is rare to find such events for adults. Secondly there is a pervasive assumption by those unfamiliar with the art that storytelling is only a children's activity. By producing high quality programs for adults we are hoping to change this assumption.

## Come and help

If you would like to participate in the Guild's efforts to promote storytelling we would welcome your assistance. Some of you have already sent in volunteer forms and, when we have time to define what we need help with, we will be contacting you. If you would like to host story swap gatherings in your home please let us know.

Again, let me thank you for participating in the Survey. It's great to know what you think.



## Notes:

The Seattle Storytellers' Guild has established a review board of professional storytellers to review storytelling tapes for "*In the Wind*."

If you wish to have your tape reviewed, send it to Seattle Storytellers' Guild, P.O. Box 45532, Seattle, WA 98145-0532.

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"Le Renouveau du Conte en France et Ailleurs" (The Storytelling Renaissance in France and Elsewhere) was the theme of an international colloquium on oral narrative held in Paris, February 21-24. Among those invited to speak was Cathryn Wellner of Seattle, whose topic was "Les nouvelles formes du conte aux USA" (New Forms of Storytelling in the US). We'll expect a report next issue.

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Make plans now to attend the Third Annual National Storytelling Congress, June 15-18, in Raleigh, North Carolina. This year's theme is storytelling's links with parallel arts, such as music, theater, and dance. Among special events planned are a concert combining the talents of storyteller Jay O'Callahan with the Raleigh Symphony Orchestra. If you've never attended a NAPPS event before, this will be the one you won't want to miss. For information, write NAPPS, P.O. Box 309, Jonesborough, TN 37659, or call them at (615) 753-2171.

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Planning a trip to Ireland this summer? If you're in Belfast around June 10th, you'll be welcomed at the first Northern Ireland Storytelling Festival. For information, write Liz Weir, 38 Lismurn Pk, Ahoghill, Co. Antrim BT42 1JN, N. Ireland



## Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM

April	4	Ron Vernon
	11	John Schneider
	18	Naomi Baltuck
	25	Michael and John Thomas
May	2	Bruce Walcott
	9	Berdine Bogger & Marianne Bundren
	16	to be announced
	23	to be announced
	30	Richard Wells
June	6	to be announced
	13	Martha Smith
	20	to be announced
	27	to be announced

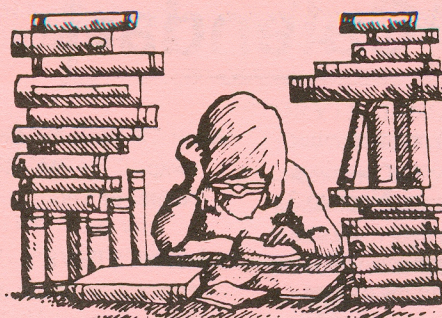
If you're interested in telling stories on KCBS, contact Janice Dahl at 16215 - 37th NE, Seattle 98155 or call her at 363-4655

## Dear friends, by Sue Grizzel

Recently some of you have contacted us to say you haven't been getting your newsletters. In the majority of these cases, investigation revealed the problem was due to an incorrect, old address listed in our computer records. Some folks were surprised to hear that the U.S. Postal Service does NOT forward bulk mail.

If you plan to move, please be sure to include the Guild when you send out your change-of-address cards. Also, if you haven't gotten newsletters when you've felt you should have, let us know right away, please don't wait. We're mere mortals here and mistakes do happen. We aim to please, and your feedback is the main way we gauge how we're doing. Thanks for your patience; keep those cards and letters coming.

Sue



Just returned from a flying trip to Arkansas for the weekend. Got snowed in at Seattle on the way out. . . and snowed in at Dallas on the way back. Fortunately my sanity was saved by the gift of a book. My hosts in Arkansas were transplanted Kentuckians, Ethel and Fred Ambrose. Fred regaled me with stories of his father, diving to yank catfish from submerged hollow logs and wrestling a 30 pound big one to the surface. They sent me home with a supply of lead catfish sinkers, a jar of honest-to-goodness sorghum and a copy of Laughter in Appalachia: A Festival of Southern Mountain Humor. It was just what I needed to get me through 16 hours of airport waiting. Enjoyable and funny enough to read over if you had to.

Laughter in Appalachia was compiled by Loyal Jones and Billy Edd Wheeler. According to their introduction, the two wanted to write a book but didn't have quite enough material so they planned a "Festival of Southern Mountain Humor" and invited all the storytellers that they could round up. . . and then printed the proceedings! The stories are quite entertaining. I imagine anyone who likes to toss a few humorous anecdotes with downhome flavor into his telling could find something useable here. As a folklorist I found the book a bit frustrating though. Loyal appears to be an English professor at Berea but he didn't bother to prepare tale notes for the material. Many of the tales have been collected elsewhere and some comparative notes would have been interesting. And then

## Sources

about stories and the  
folks who tell them

by Margaret Read MacDonald

there was the matter of the tellings themselves. They all sounded a bit like they had been written for the Reader's Digest and I wondered if some rewriter had been at work on the material. I would have expected a more varied tone and slightly less literary style if these were actual transcriptions of the tellers own words. Or perhaps the tellers all sat down and wrote them out on paper afterwards and sent them in . . . that might explain the lack of oral style to the texts. Despite those quibbles, the book is certainly a fun read and probably quite useful to some of you tellers. My Little Rock hosts told of a dear friend who suffers from cancer. They sent her a copy of the book and she swore it was just what she needed -little dabs of laughter to blot out the pain for a moment or two. Certainly a book which carries the power of laughter that well deserves praise.

And if you are looking for good humorous anecdotes, don't forget to order up some of Vance Randolph's wondrous compilations of Arkansas humor. Try Who Blowed up the Church House, The Devil's Pretty Daughter and Pissing in the Snow (Avon Publishers, \$3.95) or any of Randolph's titles. Though all are equally delightful, it was the latter title that has made it into paperback reprint and is still available in bookstores. Who says the TITLE doesn't make the book?



# Calendar

Saturdays through June 3 "Bard of the Yukon" and other Alaska stories with JOHN THOMAS, Cooper Landing Theatre, 117 S. Main Street, Pioneer Square, Noon to 2

**April 7** PETER VALANCE, Scottish storyteller, will be telling stories of the Goddess Bridhe, from his own as well as from other traditions. Open mike begins at 7 p.m.. At the Burke Museum's Boiserie coffeehouse. Free. Recommended for adults and children 10 years and older. For more info, call 525-2560.

ALLAN HIRSCH, Allan's Magic Storybook and "The Rainbow Clown. Stories, songs and Allan becomes a Clown! Seattle Center House Whirligig 12 p.m. Call 283-3726.

**April 8** CATHY SPAGNOLI tells stories to celebrate Year of the Young Reader, at University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 1-2 p.m. 634-3400.

**April 10** CARRIE KOEHNLINE & JUDY GREENBERG, Storytelling Duo, tell at Red & Black Bookstore, 430 15th Ave. E., 7 p.m., donation. Call 322-READ.

**April 15** CATHRYN WELLNER presents "Slow-Time People in a Fast-Time World" for Methow Valley Arts Alliance, Twisp Art Gallery. 8:30 p.m. Call 328-1328.

**April 20** Seattle Storytellers' Guild Board Meeting. Everyone welcome. 7 p.m.. 846 NE 98th St. For more info, call 525-2560.

**April 21** ALLAN HIRSCH, Allan's Magic Storybook and "The Rainbow Clown. Stories, songs and Allan becomes a Clown! The Child's Fair, Seattle Center. 11AM Call 283-3726.

NED LEAGER, Portland storyteller and native of North Carolina, will accompany himself on the banjo as he tells stories. Jack Tales are his specialty. Open mike begins at 7 PM. At the Burke Museum's Boiserie coffeehouse. Free. Recommended for adults and children 10 years and older. More info, 525-2560.

**April 22** SPENCER SHAW tells stories to celebrate Year of the Young Reader, at University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 1-2 p.m. 634-3400.

ALLAN HIRSCH, Allan's Magic Storybook and "The Rainbow Clown. Stories, songs and Allan becomes a Clown! The Child's Fair, Seattle Center. 3PM Call 283-3726.

**April 23** CATHRYN WELLNER spins tales for the whole family at the Child's Fair, Seattle Center. 3:30 p.m. Call 285-0760.

**April 27** Story 'n' Snack. Potluck dessert and story swap. 7:30 PM. 846 N.E. 98th St. For more info, call Naomi or Thom at 525-2560.

**April 29** STEVE SANFIELD will have a reading celebration of the publication of his book, The Adventures of High John the Conqueror. 7:30 p.m. Elliott Bay Book Store, Pioneer Square.

ROGER HERZ, Author and Storyteller, will appear at the New Linden Store, 2943 NE Blakeley at 1 p.m. Call 526-2768.

**April 30-May 5** STEVE STANFIELD leads storytelling workshops at Centrum Foundation in Port Townsend. Call 385-3102 for more information.

**May 1-6** INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL, Seattle Center, features a Storytellers Station with Seattle storytellers. Two performances daily at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Call 684-7338.

**May 5** NAOMI BALTUCK will be telling Appalachian folktales at the International Childrens' Festival at 10:30 & 12:30 in the Shaw Room at the Seattle Center. For more info, call 684-7338.

KATY RYDELL, visiting storyteller from California, will be telling an eclectic mix of traditional and original stories at the Boiserie, the Burke Museum coffeehouse. Program begins with open mike at 7 PM. Free. Recommended for adults and children 10 years and up. For more info, call 525-2560.

**May 8** DEBORA BACK at Red & Black Bookstore, 430 15th Ave. E., 7 p.m., donation. Call 322-READ.

**May 12-13** UW STORYTELLING CONFERENCE [see Workshops: "Storytelling, A Key to Our Tradition"]

**May 13** SHARON CREEDEN tells stories to celebrate Year of the Young Reader, at University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 1-2 p.m. 634-3400.

**May 18** Board Meeting. Come one, come all. 7 p.m.. 846 NE 98th St. For info, call 525-2560.

**May 19** BETTY LEHRMAN, visiting storyteller from Boston, will be presenting "Tales for the Telling" at the Boiserie, the Burke Museum coffeehouse. Program begins with open mike storytelling at 7 p.m. Recommended for adults and children aged 10 and up. Free admission. For more info, call 525-2560.



**May 25 Story 'n' Snack.** Bring a tale and a treat for this informal story swap. 7:30 p.m.. For info, call Naomi or Thom at 525-2560.

**May 26-29 Folklife Festival.** A long weekend filled with featured tellers, panel discussions of folklore and storytelling, as well as a swapping ground where audience members can share their own stories. Don't miss this major, free event at the Seattle Center. For more info, call 684-7300.

**May 27 CATHRYN WELLNER** tells tales from her travels at the University Book Store. 1 p.m, free. Call 634-3400.

**May 31 NAOMI BALTUCK** presents "Jiggity-Jog!" storytime for 4-6 year olds. 4 p.m.. Lynnwood Recreation Center. Contact Alice Taylor, 771-4030, for more information.

**June 2** An evening with MERNA HECHT, who will be telling "Old Favorites and New Treasures" at the Boiserie, the Burke Museum coffeehouse. Program begins with open mike storytelling at 7 p.m. Recommended for adults and children aged 10 and up. Free admission. For more info, call 525-2560.

**June 10 SPENCER SHAW** tells stories to celebrate Year of the Young Reader, at University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 1-2 p.m. 634-3400.

**June 12 CATHRYN WELLNER** tells tales from her travels, Red & Black Bookstore, 430 15th Ave. E., 7 p.m., donation. Call 322-READ.

**June 14-18** National Storytelling Congress, Raleigh, North Carolina. For info., write NAPPS, P.O. Box 309, Jonesborough, TN 37659, (615) 753-2171. [See Notes]

**June 15** Board Meeting. Be there or be square. 7 p.m. 846 NE 98th St. More info at that same old phone number, 525-2560.

**June 16 TOM GALT** tells stories for a Midsummer's Eve at the Boiserie, the Burke Museum coffeehouse. Program begins at 7 p.m. with open mike storytelling. Free. Recommended for adults and children 10 years and up. For more info, dial 525-2560.

**June 24 EUGENE FRIESE** tells stories to celebrate Year of the Young Reader, at University Book Store, 4326 University Way, 1-2 p.m. 634-3400.

**June 29** No Story and Snack at 846 NE 98th St. in June or July. Call Clare at 325-9409 or 358-8981 for possible alternate location.

## 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, **April 30**, 1-5 p.m., \$18. For information or to register, call 524-4556.

**THE STORY CIRCLE**, taught by Naomi Baltuck.

Whether spinning a traditional yarn or telling from your own 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 in your personal contacts by recognizing and bringing forth the storyteller in you. Taught by a professional storyteller. Northgate. Tuesdays, 7-9:30 p.m.. **May 2-23**. \$33. Register through ASUW Experimental College, 543-4735.

**STORYTELLING, A KEY TO OUR TRADITION.** 12th Annual UW Storytelling Workshop, **May 12-13**.

Keynote speaker is Sheila Egoff plus Margaret Read MacDonald, Gene Friese, and Cathryn Wellner are giving workshops. There'll be a festival of storytelling with Cathy Spagnoli, Jo Hallauer, Laurie Klein, Vi Hilbert, and Sheila Egoff. Judith Nyman-Schaaf at the library school, 543-1794, has complete details. ]

**GUEMES ISLAND STORYTELLING RETREAT**

Saturday **July 8**, 9am - 7pm. Hands on work learning tellable tales. Hints on finding and preparing tales. Discussion on folktale traditions. Learn six easy to tell tales during class. \$60 fee includes lunch, supper, materials, ferry, and follow up critique. \$25 additional for 1 credit through S.P.U. Those taking the course for credit must attend follow-up session A or B. A: July 24, 10-12, Guemes Island site. B: July 14, 7-9, Youth Theater Northwest on Mercer Island. All are welcome to attend follow-up critique session. Site: Guemes ferry leaves from 6th and I, Anacortes. Transportation provided from Guemes dock. Day will include beachwalk and excellent view of the San Juans. **DISCOUNT FOR MEMBERS OF THE SEATTLE STORYTELLERS GUILD: \$10 off fee.** For information call instructor: Dr. Margaret Read McDonald, 827-6430

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



# Survey Results

by Donald Braid

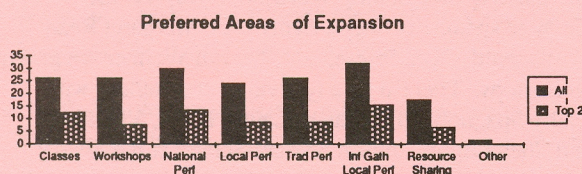
Many thanks to all of you who responded to the Survey in the last issue of *In the Wind*. 68 survey results were returned to us. Here is a brief summary of those results. If you'd like to follow up on any of the information, call Donald Braid, President.

28% of those responding said they became interested in storytelling through hearing a storyteller, 20% said they had been interested since childhood or all their lives.

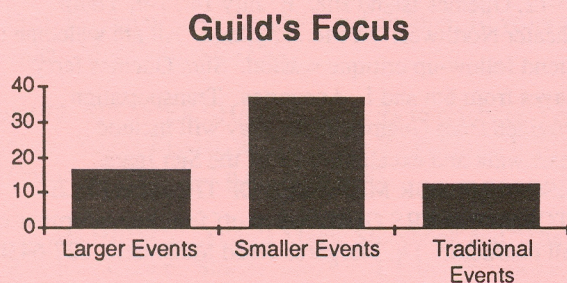
People learned about the Guild through a great variety of sources. The largest categories were: "through a friend" - 28% and "from taking a class" - 29%.

Of those who responded, 77% were satisfied with what the Guild has provided them as a member, 23% were partly satisfied, nobody said she was not satisfied.

The "Preferred Areas of Expansion" chart shows in black all the areas where you would like to see us expand our efforts, the textured columns total the first and second choices (taken from responses where choices were prioritized).

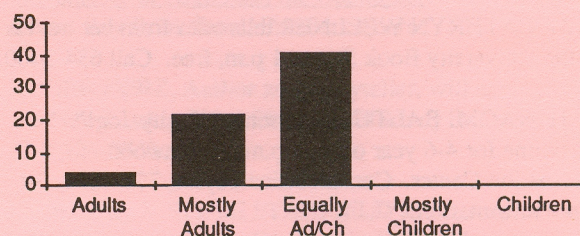


The "Guild's Focus" chart shows where you think our focus should be. "Smaller Events" such as the Boiserie and Story N Snack stand out as a preference.



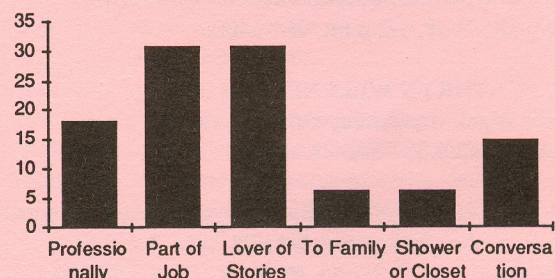
The ages that you wished us to concentrate on are summarized in the chart "Programming Ages."

## Programming Ages



The chart "Where You Tell" shows the distribution of where you tell stories.

## Where you Tell



In terms of occupation, 26% said they were teachers, 15% librarians and the rest ranged from doctors to accountants to artists to computer programmers to taxi drivers to....

People thought that the most important benefits of being a member in the Guild were the newsletter and supporting storytelling. Only 19% are members of NAPPs.

While giving many good suggestions to improve the newsletter 50% of those responding to this question said they thought the newsletter was wonderful. Of everyone responding to the survey 75% read the Newsletter cover to cover!

**Editor's note:** Expect to see some of those suggestions implemented in the next edition of *In the Wind*. Thanks!



# Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum

by Martha J. Eshelman-Smith

Storytelling is an aural art as much as an oral art. It must appeal to the ear. Techniques associated with sound in poetry - rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance - apply to stories as well. They affect the choice of words in straight narrative, create catch phrases, and appear in bits of verse embedded in stories.

"Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum,  
I smell the blood of an Englishman,  
Be he alive or be he dead,  
I'll grind his bones to make my  
bread!"

Imagine the giant of "Jack and the Beanstalk" (An Illustrated Treasury of Fairy and Folk Tales by James Riordan) without alliteration: "Gee-Ti-Fo-Bum" or "Kee-Ri-Co-Sum". Note how you automatically adjust the pronunciation of "Englishman" to rhyme with "Fum". Very early in our listening careers we were taught to listen to sounds.

Alliteration, the repetition of consonants, was the primary technique of English poetry until the end of the 15th century. Modern "translations" try to retain alliteration for the flavor of the poetry as in "Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty" (Beowulf translated by Burton Raffel) or the Welch "I was a hound, and I was a hind;" (Taliesan in The Language of the Birds edited by David M. Guss). It is still common in English tales as in:

"Nimmy nimmy not  
My name's Tom Tit Tot"

(from "Tom Tit Tot" in One Hundred Favorite Folktales edited by Stith Thompson). New England stories use alliterative phrases: "he looks wet and weary" or "deluged his wagon and his wares" ("Peter Rugg, The Missing Man" in A Book of New England Legends and Folk Lore by Samuel Adams Drake). Such alliteration seems natural yet "wet and tired" or "wagon

and goods" say the same thing.

The "Nimmy nimmy not" and "Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum" illustrate another use of sound - sound as pure sound - nonsense syllables. English and Scottish ballads are full of such phrases:

"The maid shee went to the well to  
washe,  
Lillumwham, lillumwham!"

(from "The Maid and the Palmer") or

"There were three ravens sat on a tree,  
They were as black as they might be,  
With a downe derrie, derrie, derrie,  
downe, downe."

(from "The Three Ravens") (Both ballads from The Penguin Book of Ballads edited by Geoffrey Grigson; both originally from Child).

Much of the charm of Kipling's Just So Stories is his artistry with sound. It is also much of the reason he must be memorized not paraphrased. In "How the Whale Got His Throat" we find rhyme:

"Then the Whale stood up on his tail  
and said, 'I'm hungry.'" (whale/tail).

We find alliteration:

"And the small 'Stute Fish said in a  
small 'stute voice, 'Noble and generous  
Cetacean, have you ever tasted Man?"

(small/'stute/said - note forcing of alliteration by dropping the "a" of "astute").

We find repeated rhyme:

"he stumped and he jumped and he  
thumped and he bumped, and he  
pranced and he danced, and he banged  
and he clanged ..."

and rhyme forced with grammatical error:

"By means of a grating  
I have stopped you ating."

Richard Chase's Grandfather Tales is also filled with effective uses of sound. There is the consonance of jig/jag:

"See a little gal go by here,  
with a jig and a jag ..."

(from "Gallymanders! Gallymanders!") There is rhyme as in "Old Dry Frye". There is the off-rhyme of rocks/bricks: "Build it outa rocks 'n bricks" in "The Old Sow and the Three Shoats". There is alliteration in the same story:

"Bakebelly boo! Bakebelly boo!  
Pigs and peas for supper!  
Pigs and peas!"

When your ears are listening for it, the deliberate use of sounds to create a particular effect is everywhere. "The young man stared back at the one-eyed cat. 'Wait here,' he whispered. Before long he came back with a fish in a dish." (assonance man/back/cat and with/fish/dish in "Cat's Cradle Version 1" from The Story Vine by Anne Pellowski); "Bear footprints / made a loud sound / when they hit the ground" (assonance loud/sound/ground and rhyme sound/ground in The Wishing Bone Cycle translated by Howard A. Norman); "remember this story . . . of the shrine and the stones" (alliteration story/shrine/stones in Diane Wolkstein's "White Wave"); nonsense syllables such as "Dong ga da" in her "Owl"; rhyme in Gioia Timpanelli's "The Unwilling Magician" . . . (The last three all from Homespun: Tales from America's Favorite Storytellers edited by Jimmy Neil Smith.)

Listen with your ears as well as your heart and imagination.



# Tough Cookies

c1989 by Naomi Baltuck

When I began discussing the project with a high school reading specialist, she described her group of 40 remedial readers, some of them special education students. Their greatest obstacle was not a lack of reading skills, but a lifetime of negative reinforcement and poor self-image which had affected their attitudes towards learning and towards risk-taking. Did I think that storytelling might be a valuable tool in working with these kids?

I told her how storytelling was very effective in reaching students at all different levels. More importantly, storytelling would be a wonderful key to success, and at the gut level. What better way for these high school students to receive plenty of positive reinforcement than to have them tell stories to the grateful and adoring kindergarteners in a nearby elementary school?

But the day before I was to have my first meeting with this class, the reading teacher's aide called me up to warn me. "I just think you ought to know," she said, "Don't be too disappointed if you don't reach them on the first try. They can be hostile. We're forcing them to participate. They all have attitude problems from the 'I can't' girl to the 'Leave me alone' boy."

The next day, as I watched them sauntering into the auditorium, I could see the proverbial chip on several shoulders. Their teacher would not allow them to sit in the very back row; grumbling, they moved reluctantly up to the front. With their feet up on the chairs and their arms crossed, their body language spoke loudly. Beneath those jean jackets and oversized T-shirts were the faint outlines of hidden suits of armor. Too many falls, too often bruised. Too many

of these kids had decided that there is less disgrace in failure if you don't try, than if you try first and then fail.

A story, I thought, would be the best place to begin. I started with a nice gory one that even a high school kid wouldn't mistake for a little kid's bedtime story. In the front row, one girl giggled and looked around to see if she could catch someone's eye. Another girl from the "cool crowd" was trying very hard not to listen. In the back row, I thought one boy had fallen asleep, until I caught his eyelid flickering as he peeked out from underneath.

Another story and I could see their faces soften as some students let themselves escape into the world of story, where it is always the youngest child, the ne'er-do-well who attains the unattainable and lives happily ever after.

The students seemed quite willing to lend me an ear. So I told them about the first rehearsed story I ever told, way back when I was painfully shy. Years ago, I had almost decided not to tell that story, but when I did, they listened. I realized then that those people really cared about what I was going to say and that I had something truly valuable to offer them. Before I finished telling my first story, I knew I wanted to be a storyteller.

The students listened and I hoped to make the transition from passive participation to active. I initiated a "non-threatening" storytelling game, but I had asked for too much. Those who were willing to participate were being hindered by those who were not. These were really tough cookies.

Quickly, I decided to move on to another story, one that I had not intended to tell. It was a personalized

adaptation of an urban ghost story with a surprise punchline. They laughed freely and heartily. It reminded me of something my mother used to say. "I don't care if my kids read comic books, as long as they READ. Maybe later they will refine their taste in reading material."

It was almost time for the bell to ring. I was sorry to have to pull these kids back in into the real world. I asked if they had any questions before our next meeting. At first it was silent. Then, in the front row, up went the hand of the girl who had tried so hard not to listen. "Oh, no," I thought to myself. "She's going to ask when the class will be over so they can get out of here." But when I called on her, she looked shyly over her shoulder and then asked, "Do you have to go to college if you want to be a storyteller?"

I felt my own fear of failure melt away. All over again, I knew that these students really cared about what I was going to say and that I did have something truly valuable to offer to them.

Those with the toughest suits of armor need storytelling the most. And I look forward to the opportunity to share it with them.



# A Man with No Brain

©1987 Mohammed BelHalfaoui

Translation from the French ©1988 Cathryn Wellner

In days gone by, strange things happened!

Strange things happened in days gone by!

Basil and lily, I offer them to the Prophet Mohammed. May God bless and honor him!

Here is the adventure of the renowned Jha (the Egyptians say: Gouha)—in Algeria he is called Jha, or else Ben Sakrane (Sakrane—drunk, absent-minded). Farther to the east, he is Nasredin Hodja. He is, in fact, Tyl Eulenspiegel, or Jean le Sot; the fool who sells his wisdom, he who brays like a donkey in order to be heard, and sometimes the most unbeatably cunning.

So...one day Jha met some friends armed for battle: shields, spears, bows, and quivers full of arrows.

"But where are you going in those disguises?"

"Listen, don't you know that we are professional soldiers? Obviously we are going to take part in a battle, and it promises to be rough!"

"Good! This is my one chance to see what happens in these things. I've heard about them but never seen them with my own eyes. Let me go with you, at least once!"

"Well, come then! You are welcome!"

And he found himself among the small platoon, going to the battlefield to join the rest of the army.

The first arrow that was shot pierced his forehead!

Quick! A surgeon! He arrived, examined the wounded man, nodded, and declared, "It is in deep! To remove it will be easy. But if the tiniest piece piece of brain comes out with it, he will die!"

The wounded man seized the doctor's hand and kissed it, expressing his "deep gratitude to the Master," and declared, "Doctor, you can remove the arrow without fear; there won't be the tiniest bit of brain on it."

"You, be quiet!" said the doctor. "Let the experts take care of you. How can you tell that it hasn't reached your brain?"

"I know only too well," said Jha, "because if I had the any brains at all, I would never have come with my 'friends.' I'm not a soldier. I just wanted to do something interesting. I got mixed up in something that was none of my business, and punishment was swift."

[In Arabic Mohammed ends the story with the rhythmic, "Hiyya mchat tetkerkeb, wa-na jît f-elmarkeb," which means, "The story has rolled down the hill. I climb back in my boat."

The story is offered as a gift from a generous Algerian storyteller who lives in Paris. See *In the Wind*, Spring 1988.]



A Storyteller's Station will be featured at the International Children's Festival, May 1-6, at the Seattle Center. Stories from Japan, China, the Netherlands, Africa, Appalachia and our own Pacific Northwest. Don't miss it! Call 684-7347 for tickets and more information.

Finding your own stories to tell: The Washington State Folklife Council is sponsoring **Regional Folklife Tours** throughout the Northwest and Southwest sections of our State. Dates are June 23-25: Southwest and July 28-30: Northwest. To find out more about exploring the cultural diversity of Washington, contact the Folklife Council in Tumwater (206) 586-8252.

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**DEADLINE FOR THE July NEWSLETTER IS June 10...**

Articles & queries should be sent to the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, P.O. Box 45532, Seattle 98145-0532.

***Seattle Storytellers' Guild***

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