

in the Wind

Seattle Storytellers' Guild Summer 1989, Vol. XII, Number 3

2nd Annual Northwest Storytelling Festival

Yes, it is happening again!

The Second Annual Northwest Storytelling Festival is scheduled for **Friday and Saturday, September 22 and 23** at Lakeside School, 14050 First Avenue N.E. in Seattle.

This year the festival will offer workshops as well as storytelling performances. The festival begins with a Friday night concert at 7:30 p.m. This concert showcases the featured tellers, who are:

Joel ben Izzy, from San Francisco, emphasizes Yiddish folklore. He has performed in Jerusalem, Paris and Tokyo, enhancing his repertoire throughout his travels. To spin his tales, he utilizes mime, drama and occasional magic and puppetry.

Seattle Sass, tandem storytellers Sharon Creeden and Pat Peterson, specializes in women who lived in the west. Together and individually, they tell original stories as well as tradi-

tional tales. **Peter Vallance**, a storyteller and dancer from Scotland, tells stories of the Goddess Bridghe mixed with Hindu, Haitian and Native American tales.

Cathryn Wellner, from Seattle, tells original tales about "ordinary" people - postal clerks, bag ladies, street musicians. Her repertoire of traditional tales emphasizes Irish, Dutch and Algerian materials.

Saturday morning each of the featured tellers will offer one hour workshops on storytelling. Festival goers have the opportunity to attend two workshops - 9:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. Saturday afternoon the featured tellers will give a one hour children's concert. It begins at 1:30 p.m. A story swapping ground will be held from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Storytellers with diverse repertoires, styles and experience are sure to appear and delight the audience. Saturday afternoon will end with 45 minute concerts by each featured teller. Again, festival goers may attend two concerts - 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

The festival ends with a Saturday evening concert "Once in a Hundred Years", celebrating the Washington State Centennial with two guest tellers representing our state's traditions.

Tickets for the full festival are \$20 for Guild members (\$26 for non-members; see membership form on the back of this newsletter). For individual events, the children's concert is \$2, all other events are \$5 for Guild members (\$6 for nonmembers) with a \$20 family maximum. To reserve tickets call 236-0730 or 525-2560. Please note that only the children's concert is recommended for children under 10 years old. The festival, except for the workshops, will be interpreted for the hearing impaired.

A wonderful group of volunteers, who will be properly thanked in the next newsletter, are producing this festival. We still need volunteers to work at the festival itself. If you are interested in helping, please call Richard Wells, Chairperson of the Festival Committee at 621-8646 or 236-0730.

On the air

Rod Winget is the new coordinator of storytellers for KBCS radio.

This is a good opportunity for storytellers to gain experience. Call Rod at 769-0294 and volunteer to be a radio star.

(206) 621-8646

We're proud to announce the birth of our new phone number. It's not fancy but it's all ours! Whenever you have questions, call the Storytellers' Guild at **621-8646**.

Call the Guild

Tape Review

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.

On the Board

We have a new Board! For those who were not at the annual membership meeting, the members are:

Naomi Baltuck - Long active in the Guild, Naomi is the new president of the Board. She teaches storytelling as well as maintaining a flourishing storytelling career. Her tapes include "The Land of Our Hearts' Desire: Celebrating the Pioneering Spirit of Early Homesteaders in the Great Northwest" and "Traveling Light: Modern Day Fairy Tales of Time Travelers, World Travelers, and Story Travelers."

Gene Friese - Gene returns to the board after a year long break. He is the bard of Bard and Bears. An active storyteller for twenty-five years, he teaches storytelling for the University of Washington. This is called "retirement".

Clare Graham - known to occasionally bark in her sleep, has been the Editor of *In the Wind* for a long time. In her other life, she works at a Bank and tells computer stories to employees, kayaks and is interested in marble, mystery and fishing boats.

Sue Grizzell - After thirteen years as a professional actress, Sue "saw the light" and became a storyteller. She has performed at Folklife and the Boissiere. She has been a member of the board for two years, serving as coordinator of membership and volunteers.

Ken Jackson, a.k.a. Grey Eagle - A new member of the board, he is the Director of Sacred Circle Storytellers and the Chairman of the Indigenous Minority Peoples Committee at the University of Washington. Ken has lectured on the oral tradition and told stories of Native Americans here and in Europe. He teaches at the Univer-

sity in Communications, American Indian Studies and Anthropology.

Margaret Read MacDonald - Margaret is a children's librarian at the Bothell Public Library (King County Library System). She has two daughters and is a member of the board of Youth Theater Northwest. She has a Ph.D. in Folklore for Indiana University. Her publications include: *Twenty Tellable Tales*, *When the Lights Go Out*, and the *Storyteller's Source Book*, a standard reference work.

Sally Porter-Smith - Another children's librarian, Sally works in the Shoreline Library (King County Library System). She combines puppetry with storytelling. She joins the board this year as the new editor of "*In the Wind*".

Martha Smith - The grant writer for the board, she is beginning her second year on the board. Martha specialized in Buddhist folklore at the University of Washington. She writes her own stories which she tells at open mike or Story 'n Snack. She supports herself not by her writing stories but by writing computer programs that write paychecks (and related reports) for the University of Washington.

Cheri Trebon - A storylistener all her life, she became a story teller when she found a story that touched her deeply and simply needed to be told. She told it and became hooked. When not telling stories, she is treasurer for the Guild and a commercial credit analyst for Key Bank.

Ron Vernon - The father of three children, Ron has told stories for the last six years primarily to audiences of adults and older children. He writes many of his own stories. He has been the legal advisor on the board for the last four years.



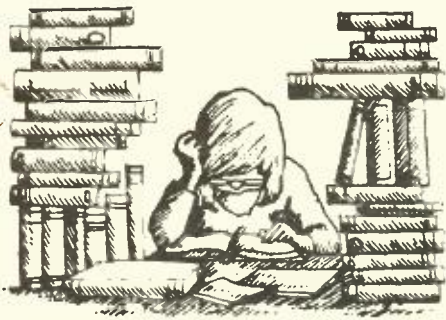
Notes:

Needed: stories promoting care and concern for the environment, from all cultures, for a special project which **Cathy Spagnoli** is working on in India during August and September. Please call her with ideas (937-8679) or send copies of tales by August 6th to Cathy Spagnoli, 5646 25th S.W., Seattle, WA 98106.

Merna Hecht has been chosen as an Exchange Place teller at this fall's National Storytelling Festival sponsored by NAPPS. She will tell the classic Greek myth of "Daphe and Apollo".

Wives' Tales Story Tellers, featured at the First Annual Northwest Storytelling Festival, now has a tape "Moon Tales". This is a collection of Chinese folk tales about the moon. Order from Nan Gregory, 4143 West 15th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 3A4 or from Melanie Ray, 4432 Walden St., Vancouver, B.C. V5V 3S3

Storyfest Journeys offer unique travel opportunities to out-of-the-way places. Led by well-known storyteller Robert Béla Wilhelm and his business associate, Mary Jo Kelly, the journeys are to destinations steeped in stories, legends, and history. Upcoming offerings: Celtic Enchantments, Storytelling in the West of Ireland, **September 16-24**; Pilgrimage to St. Francis' Italy, Medieval Hill Towns of Umbria, **October 20-29**; and Canterbury Tales, Pilgrimage Roads of East Anglia, Wessex & Kent, **July 22-July 1, 1990**. For information contact Storyfest Journeys, 3901 Cathedral Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016, (202) 364-6143.



Sources

about stories and the folks who tell them

by Margaret Read MacDonald

With summer's arrival many of us are telling stories in parks and other outdoor sites. A new publication by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac should come in handy for those of us who like to tie stories into nature studies at times. **KEEPS OF THE EARTH: NATIVE AMERICAN STORIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN** (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 1988) offers ways to complement story with nature exploration activities. 23 Native American tales are included.

Each tale is accompanied by "Discussion" suggestions, "Questions" to ask the children which might expand their thinking about the topic, and "Activities", including simple science experiments. The "science" section of each chapter seems to have been prepared by Michael J. Caduto, an "ecologist, author, and storyteller". The "Questions" section seems a little forced, some are interesting, others a bit inane. However, the "Activities" section has several exciting suggestions. The notion of combining story and science can be usefully employed by teachers, librarians, day-camp leaders, Sunday School teachers, etc.

We assume that the tales have been retold by Joseph Bruchac, a teller with Abenaki ancestry. The tales are selected from throughout North America, not from Bruchac's

heritage and no notes are given to let us know where he found the tales. I would have preferred a little more information about just where the tales were collected. However, the tribe from which each was collected is given. A map at the book's front attempts to show where each group was located but is confusing enough to create wrong impressions in several cases.

Although the book has flaws, it is a welcome addition to our storytelling collections. The efforts of Caduto and Bruchac in pulling together Native American tales and science studies should have a lasting impact on many science curriculums and park naturalist telling. And hopefully it will inspire many library storytellers to include a look at science topics in their own programming. A good index helps us locate stories on conservation, life cycles, geology . . . a variety of science topics.

Washington storytellers may want to note also the nature related uses of our old favorite by Ella Clark. Clark includes stories surrounding many of our familiar natural wonders, Mt. Ranier, Spirit Lake, Deception Pass, Mt. Baker. Her stories are brief and can be read aloud to campers or expanded into tellings.

Use these two sources to build a set of nature tales and plan a beachside or trailside storytime this summer!



More Notes

High country is a great place to be in August, so head for Parmer Lake, Colorado, and the **First Rocky Mountain Storytelling Festival, August 18-19**. Featured are three Colorado storytellers (Norma Livo, Bonnie Phipps, and John Stansfield) and Arizona teller Cat Burdulis. Story concerts and swaps, workshops, and a setting at the foot of the Rockies. For information write John Stansfield, Box 588, Monument, Colorado 80132.

Kinfolk and Kissing Cousins: Preserving Personal and Family History, taught by Cathryn Wellner. This workshop is on the gathering, recording and telling of stories that are ours alone. The topics covered include interviewing family members, recording our own reminiscences, shaping anecdotes, where to start and when to stop, using library and other resources and deciding the form our history will take. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. in beautiful Port Ludlow. August 12th. Contact Chase Anderson at 437-2184 for details.

Jon Spelman, storyteller and emmy award winning star of NBC/WRC television series "Three Stories Tall," will be performing in Bellingham the first week of October.

If anyone is interested in having Jon appear in the Seattle area, contact him at 1526 Buchanan St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011 (202) 291-7431.

Where Did It Happen?

by Martha J. Eshelman-Smith

Jackie Torrence may place "How Brer Rabbit Outsmarted the Frogs" in the South by saying "What are we a-goin' to do 'bout Brer Coon catchin' us?". Waddie Mitchell may invoke the Southwest by reciting:

"Away up high in the Sierry Petes,
Where the yellor pines grow tall,
Ole Sandy Bob and Buster Jig
Had a rodeer camp last fall."

from "Tying the Knots in the Devil's Tail". (Both from Homespun edited by Jimmy Neil Smith.) But for many of us telling a story in dialect yields ludicrous results. Dialects impart a sense of locale but location, detailed and explicit, can serve the same purpose.

The story "The Glutton and the One with Brains" is a tale of a butterfly outwitting a blue crane. This version is explicitly set in Fiji: "In olden days, a blue crane fished for his living on the beaches and reefs around Namuka Island near Suva. A butterfly was blown away from the Tongan group and was swept all the way to Namuka." (in Bed the Turtle Softly by Mary Edith and Joel S. Branham).

This technique is common in tales from the British Isles. "A long time ago, when there were no coal or lead mines and no big towns in Durham County, when the River Wear flowed through thick forests and fine pastures ..." (from "Mary-Ann and the Cauld Lad of Hylton"). "A long time ago, when fairies and giants both good and bad lived in Northamptonshire, there dwelt near Brixworth ..." (from "Jonas and the Boggart of Brixworth").

"Once upon a time, in a pleasant wood on the outskirts of the village of Walgrave in Northamptonshire ..." (from "Jip and the Witch of Walgrave"). Each of these stories from Folk Tales from the North by Winifred Finlay could be set anywhere; the plot does not require the specific locale. Yet each set firmly in Northamptonshire.

Location can be implied. John Bierhorst sets the tales of The Monkey's Haircut and Other Stories Told by the Maya in Mexico by reference to food. "Enormous tortillas rained down, completely burying him." (in "Chac"). "The sun ate beans and tortillas, and sardines with squash seeds." (in "The Mole Catcher"). "Next morning, when he awoke, all his tortillas and corn soup had disappeared." (in "Tup and the Ants"). "... took his cheese and barley bread from his bag, lit a small fire to heat up his butter tea..." would not be mistaken for Mexico. "Butter tea" marks "The Castle In the Lake" as Tibetan (from Tibetan Folk Tales by Frederick and Audrey Hyde-Chambers). Just as clearly "... large mess of collards on a right big platter, a plate filled with squares of cornbread ..." sets a story in the American south (from Tales from the Big Thicket, Francis E. Abernethy, editor).

Tales from the Big Thicket also illustrates how colloquial phrases can imply a locale. The chapter "Tales from Uncle Owen" provides several examples: "Brother Hammond preached the plain gospel without any frills or furbelows, and he didn't feel that he needed any fancy education to interpret the Book." "Even some of the

old folks who hadn't fleshened up too much were out in the dog trot cutting the seed collard." "One night it was cold as floggins and we were down at Uncle Owen's listening to him tell about that stormy night that he got lost near the old haunted Haney place."

Names also imply locale. The name "Mboma" implies an African origin in "once upon a time Mboma, the snake, was out hunting." (from Tortoise the Trickster by Loreto Todd). "Goolayyahlee" implies Australia in "Goolayyahlee the pelican was a great magician." (from The Stories of Vanishing Peoples by John Mercer). "Kajortoq" implies Eskimo in "one summer day, Kajortoq, the red fox, left her brood of cubs in the den ..." (from Tales from the Igloo by Maurice Metayer). But one cannot assume listeners will identify "Mboma" with Cameroon, "Goolayyahlee" with the Noongahburrah, or "Kajortoq" with the Copper Eskimo group of Inuit.

One builds the sense of locale by details that are common knowledge, enhances it with details known to local inhabitants - plants, animals, geography, weather. But factual errors or mispronunciations instantly break the illusion. Pick an anthology such as Jane Yolen's Favorite Folktales from Around the World and read with awareness of locale. Some stories are without locale e.g. "The Seventh Father of the House"; some explicitly set the locale e.g. "The Spirit of the Van"; some imply it by names e.g. "The King's Favorite"; some which depend on locale use many techniques simultaneously e.g. "The Prayer That Was Answered".

Calendar

Note to story tellers and story lovers from the Editor:

I hope that you found one another in July. *In the Wind* was not published July first, as scheduled. My Father died the end of June. Please accept my apologies for the delay.

- Aug 1 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Aug 4 Storytelling at the Boisserie. Open Mike at 7:00. Featured teller to be announced.
- Aug 5 Classic Children's Stories at the Elliott BayBook Company, 101 South Main, 11 a.m. Ages 4-8. Call 624-6600.
- Aug 9 Fur, Fins and Fables, a Woodland Park Zoo summer program will present animal stories for ages 4-7 told by Merna Hecht, 11:00 a.m. at the Open Air Theater, Woodland Park Zoo.
- Aug 11 Cathryn Wellner tells Tales by the Sea at Port Ludlow. 8 p.m. Call 437-2184
- Aug 11-14 Peninnah Schram, Doug Lipman, Syd Lieberman will be at the C.A.J.E. conference (The Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education). Call Carol Starin 325-1631 for details.
- Aug 14 Appalachian Tales told by Margaret Read MacDonald, 7:30 p.m. at the Bothell Library

Storytelling 7:00 p.m. at Red and Black Books
- Aug 15 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Aug 16 Fur, Fins and Fables, a Woodland Park Zoo summer program will present animal stories for ages 4-7 told by Merna Hecht, 11:00 a.m. at the Open Air Theater, Woodland Park Zoo
- Aug 18 Storytelling at the Boisserie. Open Mike at 7:00. Judith Black of Boston who tells adult stories is the featured teller.

Sabbath Services conducted by Master Storyteller Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Plus Jewish Folktales from around the world. Refreshments. 7-10 p.m. Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S. Cost \$4-\$10; children \$2. Childcare available. Signing available by reservation. Info: Call 632-1295

- Aug 18-19 First Rocky Mountain Storytelling Festival and Workshops featuring Cat Burdulis, Bonnie Phipps, Norma Livo and John Stansfield. For information write University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Division of Continuing Education, Box 7150, Colorado Springs, Co. 80933-7150.
- Aug 21 Land of the Heart's Desire: Stories of the Oregon Trail told by Naomi Baltuck, 7:30 p.m. at the Bothell Library
- Aug 22 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Aug 29 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Aug 31 Story 'n Snack at 7:30 p.m. Bring a tale and a treat for this informal story swap. Call 525-0382 to verify location.
- Aug 31 Board Meeting. Come one, come all! Call 525-2560 for time and location.
- Sept 1 Storytelling at the Boisserie. Open Mike at 7:00. Bruce Wolcott, a past winner of the Folklife Liar's Contest is the featured teller.
- Sept 2 Fairytales at Elliott Bay Books, 101 S. Main Street, 11 a.m. Ages 4-8. Call 624-6600.
- Sept 5 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Sept 12 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Sept 15 Storytelling at the Boisserie. Open Mike at 7:00. Floating Eagle Feather, a Native American who travels the world with stories of peace, is the featured teller.
- Sept 19 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Sept 22-23 Second Annual Northwest Storytelling Festival with Joel ben Izzy, Cathryn Wellner, Seattle Sass and Peter Valance. See front page article for details.
- Sept 26 Storytelling on KCBS 91.3 FM at 7:00 p.m.
- Sept 28 Story 'n Snack at 7:30 p.m. Bring a tale and a treat for this informal story swap. Call 525-0382 to verify location.

Paris Colloquium on the Revival of Storytelling

by Cathryn Wellner

Presentiments of disaster crowded around me in the dark of an early morning at Paris's Orly Airport. Exhausted by the disorientation of jet lag and a sleepless night spent trying to conform my body to an airline seat, I put my day pack on a cart and went in search of my luggage.

The heavy grey lump that was to be companion of my travels for the next six weeks was a reassuring sight as it bumped along the conveyor belt. I swung it onto the luggage cart and stared in horror. No day pack.

The day pack held everything I hadn't trusted to the luggage compartment: money, airline tickets within Europe and back to the States, Eurailpass, itinerary, addresses and telephone numbers of people I'd be working for and staying with in France, Germany, England, and Ireland, and the sine quo non of my visit to Paris: the talk I was to deliver next day.

Gloomy thoughts flooded my tired mind. How could I possibly extemporize a talk which was to be published as part of the proceedings of an international meeting, and in a language in which nearly twenty years' absence from France had made me rusty? As to the names and addresses, without them I couldn't find my hosts in Germany and England (another story).

I fled the security area, eyes searching for a familiar leather pack, mind focused on alternatives: plead illness; take the next flight home; mysteriously vanish. Suddenly it appeared, right where it had fallen when I first placed it on the cart. Never has a well-used pack looked so beautiful. The flood of relief nearly cured my fatigue. I felt ready for the next challenge.

Genesis of the Colloquium

The adventure began for me in December 1987. Thérèse Perras and I sat in the den of the house she and her husband were restoring in the Paris

suburb of Croissy-sur-Seine. She talked of her dream that Paris should host an international colloquium on the revival of storytelling.

Already a storyteller before coming to Raleigh, North Carolina, for two years, Thérèse's exposure to NAPPS and the broad community of American storytelling had whetted her appetite for a kind of profound discussion on the role of storytelling in the twentieth century.

It was an ambitious idea—bringing together distinguished scholars and talented storytellers, people who study oral narrative and those who perform orally, people who view stories as a therapeutic tool and those whose stories heal. A long list of organizations and individuals gave energetic support to the project, including CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research), ATP (National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions), Age d'Or (Golden Age, an association for senior citizens that has a strong storytelling component as part of its many activities), and DRAC (the Regional Office of Cultural Affairs of the Ile de France).

Dream Becomes Reality

Now in February 1989 the dream had become reality. Over three hundred people came, mostly from France but also from England, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, Canada, and the U.S. (Mary O'Leary and I from the Pacific Northwest.) Attendees from France represented a broad spectrum of cultures.

Each morning began with three or four lectures to the entire group. Most of the speakers were academics. (Mimi Barthelemy, a Haitian storyteller living in Paris, and I were exceptions.) Afternoons we chose from among three different panels, each on a different topic. Every

evening there was storytelling, not enough to satisfy all of the tellers gathered there but enough that we were struck by the wide variety of styles.

Relief Is Just a Talk Away

The talk over which I had lost so much sleep was scheduled for the first morning of the colloquium. I had been asked to talk about storytelling in America. They'll be bored, I had told myself. It's all so obvious, so unlike the talks they'll hear from the scholars. A thorn of simplicity surrounded by the roses of scholarship.

The first talk had been excellent, but when the one before mine threatened to last until the fourth of July and the audience began looking for the exits, I anticipated a fiasco. By the time I was introduced, they were ready to bolt. My carefully prepared talk would have to be slightly abridged if I wanted to avoid mutiny.

With the audience already restless, I had nothing to lose. The hours of preparation, including having a French friend correct my vocabulary and syntax, allowed me to relax. I stood and began. (The moderator wouldn't let me give the audience a stretch, probably sharing some of my own fears about their dwindling tolerance.)

My standing startled the group. Their attention shifted from their own discomfort to this person on stage speaking in accented French and making humorous asides about a serious subject. I stayed with my determination to keep the talk within the thirty-minute limit, though the audience wanted more.

Never has a talk made me the object of so much attention. I was stunned by the number of people who thanked me for my humor and spontaneity, for liberating them. (I

never did figure out what I was liberating them from.) Analyzing later what seemed at the time an almost embarrassing outpouring of admiration, I decided that it was less the content of my talk which they appreciated than several other factors.

One was the surprise of the talk's being presented in French by an American. During the weeks of preparation, I'd wished many times I hadn't agreed to that but ended up feeling grateful that Thérèse assumed I could. Another was the difference between a scholarly presentation and one by a storyteller. The former owe primary responsibility to the material being presented, the latter to the audience. A third was my willingness to depart from the script in the interest of clarity or brevity. The French are more bound by text. Even during a question-and-answer session, they carefully prepare their thoughts and read from their notes. A fourth seemed to be my not taking either myself or the subject too seriously, being willing to point out some of the problems and controversies in American storytelling and laugh at my struggles with the language.

Vivid Impressions

The next three and a half days were dizzying. The colloquium organizers were probably more ambitious than they should have been. That happens back home too. So many ideas were presented, so many directions pursued. The crowded schedule left no space to dive fully into any of them.

Still, I am left with many vivid impressions, though I am writing this three months after the colloquium. Here are a few of them:

The standard of French discourse is on the average more serious and articulate than American. Arguments tend to be presented in a series of points, always with a clear introduction and conclusion. Question-and-answer periods

seldom elicit questions. They are, rather, a means for those not having just given a talk to be sure they don't miss the opportunity. Responses from the audience are often long, sometimes nearly as long as the preceding talk, not always directly relevant, but always eloquent. High-level conversation is important to the French. (N.B. Bettelheim and Freud were referred to more often than Jung and von Franz. The reverse would more likely be true here.)

Names were drawn randomly for two of the storytelling evenings, so the tellers were a mixed lot. Most told folktales, though we Yanks added a note of diversity by telling many original stories. Any time you're struggling to understand a language, the people speaking it always sound more intelligent than you feel. But it seemed to me the tellers I listened to understood the stories they were telling at a deeper level than is often the case here.

France can boast some superb tellers. Of those I heard, I was most drawn to Mimi Barthelemy, a Haitian woman living in Paris. The moment she stepped on stage, the audience was hers. They chanted and sang and followed every word of one of the most sensual 50-year-old women I've ever seen.

Many American storytellers feel they have no ethnic identity on which to draw. They are not alone. French tellers face the same questions about taking stories out of traditional context, about finding stories they can and should tell. In Paris we heard over and over, "I'm French, part of the majority culture. I have no ethnic heritage. What stories can I tell?"

Oil and Water

Blending scholars and storytellers is more of a challenge than gathering storytellers from around the world. The latter quickly found each other and began forging interesting connections in the brief times available for that. There were impressive and fascinating scholars in-

involved, much to the credit of the organizers. But beyond listening to each other, the two worlds did little mingling. Nevertheless, bringing them together was a superb idea and merits repeating.

Scholars have so far given little credence to the renaissance of storytelling. They criticize what the French call *néo-conteurs* and we call revivalist storytellers for trivializing stories by taking them out of context. Jean-Noël Pelen, a folklorist from southern France, pointed out that folklorists were the first *néo-conteurs*, gathering tales of a few tellers and calling them representative of the larger culture.

Pelen posed challenges to the storytelling community. At the same time he impressed me as understanding more than most scholars the impulse leading people in modern, technological societies to yearn for stories. The challenge is in being responsible toward the cultures from which our stories come. When we recontextualize the stories of other cultures, we need to ask ourselves hard questions.

In Translation

Mindful of the needs of non-French speakers, the organizers had tried to provide interpreters. That led to humor and chaos when some of those who had volunteered with good will proved unequal to the task. Those who did not speak French missed a lot of what went on, but I suspect a similar conference here would make fewer allowances for foreign speakers.

Some things are universal. The French audience responded to my story of a Seattle letter carrier just as English-speaking audiences do. But I found the honor of moderating a morning session to be more ordeal than pleasure since that kind of task is culturally informed and I missed many cues. On the whole, though, I was buoyed by the contact with people who share my love of stories, be they tellers or scholars. We have much to learn from each other. This was a grand beginning.

"Art is a lie that lets us see the truth." —Picasso

"Story tries -as all art does- to make sense of a world not especially noted for making much sense at all." —Lloyd Alexander

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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*

P.O. Box 45532

Seattle, Washington 98145-0532

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

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DEADLINE FOR THE October NEWSLETTER IS Sept 10..

Articles & queries should be sent to the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, P.O. Box 45532, Seattle 98145-0532 or call 621-8646.

Seattle Storytellers' Guild

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