



in the Wind

— Seattle Storytellers' Guild Winter 1995, Vol. XVIII, Number 1

A Big Thank You to All Our Volunteers!

This is a special thank you to all the volunteers that helped make this fall such a successful season for the Seattle Storytellers' Guild. Many of our members lent a hand at the Northwest Storytelling Festival in October and at Tellabration in November, doing everything from registration to refreshments to running sound. We truly could not have carried off these events without them. Many thanks to:

Mike Armstrong
Karen Bottner
Beryl Bergoyne
Peter Chelemedos
Constance Crain
Jean Darnell
Suzy Irwin
Chance Hunt
Ann Lanning
Phil Johnson
Margaret Martin

Barbara Meyer
Julie Miller
John Mischo
Lare Mischo
Pat Peterson
Jean Pollack
Charlotte Sanborn
Riku Smith
Geraldine Troy
Merilyn Wakefield
Richard Wells

If you would like to get more actively involved in the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, just call Volunteer Coordinator Avis Jobrack at (206) 863-5025, or drop her a line at 5415-122nd Ave. E., Sumner, WA 98390. Let her know your interests, and whenever your help is needed, you will get a call.



(plus anyone whose name was inadvertently left out!)

23 Storytelling with **Deborah Hudson**, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books, 15788 Redmond Way, Redmond, WA 98052.

26 Bellevue Regional Library **Story Corner**, speaker TBA, 1:30 p.m. 1111-110th Ave. NE, Bellevue, WA 98004, 450-1775.

30 **Story 'N Snack** potluck dessert and story swap, 7:30 - 10 p.m. For information and directions, call 621-8646.

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April



10 Earthsong: potpourri of tellers celebrate Earth Day with stories about the environment at **Second Mondays on the Hill**, Seattle Storytellers' Guild Monthly Storytelling Event, 7 p.m. New City Theatre, 1634-11th Ave., Seattle, \$4 SSG/\$6 general.

Out of Area

Seventh Annual **Folk Alliance Conference**, Red Lion Lloyd Center, Portland, OR, Feb. 16-19, 1995. For more information, contact (919) 962-3397 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (EST). Early registration by Jan. 15.

10th **Bay Area Storytelling Festival**, May 20-21, 1995, El Sobrante, CA (510) 525-1533. Save the date!

Folklife Alert

It's time to start thinking about storytelling at the Northwest Folklife Festival. This year the event will be held May 26-29, with most of the storytelling programs on Sunday and Monday. If you have not received an application form, call the Festival office at 684-7300. Slots are limited because of performance space and times.

New this year will be a Friday afternoon program to showcase young tellers. If you need help in organizing a training program for the children and young adults in schools or libraries, call Gene Friese at 284-9469 for ideas and assistance.

French Storyteller to Tour U.S. in Spring

Jean Guillon, a storyteller from France, will be touring the United States during March and April 1995. He is available to perform in English and French for audiences aged 8 to 88. A native of Marseille, Jean has been telling throughout Europe for more than 15 years. Jean draws on the ancient culture of Provence, and also on traditional Hindu tales and tales of wisdom including Sufi stories (he has also lived in India for extensive periods of time). For more information, contact Nancy Moshé, 55 Marcourt Drive, Chappaqua, NY 10514, (914) 238-4627; fax (914) 238-5032.



About the Teller (cont.)

Continued from page 2

In the diversity of our American culture, knowing what views we share in common with our audience is not always easy. My worst *faux pas* in storytelling was a tale I learned and saw as a tale of just revenge (what goes around comes around) being interpreted as a tale condoning violence against women. I have friends who object to "Cinderella" on grounds it contributes to a

negative stereotype of stepmothers. One could easily be silenced finding no completely politically correct stories to tell. Or one can recognize that in telling stories, one speaks the truth of who you are—your history your values, how you make sense of the chaotic world. As a people collectively choose and preserve their tales, so an individual chooses and preserves her tales.

What the Tales Really Say (About the Teller)

by Martha J. Eshelman-Smith

Recently I have been reading Ellen Frankel's *The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore* which begins with the observation that the tales cover three continents, four millennia, and at least nine major languages—yet the stories remain distinctly Jewish. The author then observes that the stories not only teach the Jewish history, the stories teach an interpretation of history, a particular way of making sense out of a world that sometimes seems absurd.

The story of "The Birth of Jacob and Esau" from the book gives a vivid example: "Two nations struggle in your womb, and how should your body hold them, if the whole world itself will prove too small to contain their strife? Each one owns a world, one the Torah, the other sin. One will give birth to Solomon, who will build the Temple; the other to Vespasian, who will destroy it. One will be Rome and the other Israel, and they will be at each other's throats until the end of time." The confidence that history is guided by divine covenant allows a genealogical story from nearly 2,000 years earlier to explain the destruction of the Temple.

If Frankel's observation is true, then might it also be true that shared history receives a different interpretation when told by different peoples? A provocative example is explored in Reuven Firestone's *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*. In Genesis and in Jewish folklore, Ishmael's birth is a blessing although he will be outside the Jewish people. The neighboring peoples—the Ishmaelites—with whom the Jewish people had frequent contact are brought into the story of history. Yet in Islamic sources, references to Ishmael's birth are rare and, even more rarely, give any significance to it. Rather, Islamic sources stress Ishmael as a monotheistic prophet—a stress reflecting different concerns.

There is another class of stories—those that seem to readily cross cultural lines with no significant change. E.L. Ranelagh's *The Past We Share: The Near Eastern Ancestry of Western Folk Literature* contains many ex-

amples. Petrus Alfonsi wrote *Disciplina Clericalis* in the early 12th century utilizing tales from his Jewish ancestry, his Muslim rules, his Christian faith...Tales collected in the contemporary South such as calling the dog in to feel his fur rather than getting up to see if it is raining are found in Alfonsi's tales. The tale reflects universally recognized human traits and need no "translation" to be told in a different culture."

How does this translate into practical storytelling? I would suggest that in order to tell a story well it is necessary to understand why the story speaks to you. From that knowledge, one can judge the appropriate audience, companion tales, and emphasis to give a tale. For example, I enjoy telling Cinderella stories because I see the story as one of Cinderella regaining what is rightfully hers. Versions of the tale such as the Bulgarian tale recounted by A. Nicoloff in which "Cinderella" is the cause of her own misfortune or the Santal tale edited by N. Philip in which "Cinderella" is male and unsuccessful have special appeal—they disrupt the rags-to-riches stereotype of the tale and allow the listener to hear the tales as I hear it.

The Cinderella tale is found throughout the world because the concern for regaining (retaining) one's rightful place is universal. Thus I am comfortable telling some version of the story to any audience. But I would not tell the story alongside "Jack and the Beanstalk" for it is a story of ill-gotten gain (successful theft by a not-so-smart boy) which clashes with the moral vision of Cinderella.

In contrast, although the story of the god Garuda outwitting his brother Siva in a race around the world is one of my favorite stories, I rarely tell it. My own Christian heritage (with its not-too-distant colonial past) makes it too easy for an audience to devalue the Hindu conception of God if I tell humorous tales of Hindu Gods. I tell the tale only to audiences which I know understand and value Hindu thought—a system that makes sense of the world in ways quite different than that of the Judeo-Christian system.

Continued on page 5



Sources: About Stories and the Folks Who Tell Them

by Margaret Read MacDonald, King County Library System



Three exciting new storytelling tools have just arrived! *Ready-to-Tell-Tales: Sure Fire Stories from America's Favorite Storytellers* by David Holt and Bill Mooney (Little Rock: August House, 1994; \$16.95 paperback) contains 40 tales contributed by professional storytellers. Brief suggestions for telling the story are included, along with short notes about the tellers who contributed the stories. Many of the stories would be easy to retell, and it is always useful to be able to examine another teller's tale renditions. Every storyteller will want to get hands on this book.

The intent of *Ready-to-Tell-Tales* is to offer stories which other tellers might enjoy telling. Thus the contributors have selected tales which they are glad to share with the storytelling community. No permission need be sought unless you wish to record or publish the tale. The authors do suggest however "When you tell one of the tales from this book, tell a little about the teller you got it from as well. In this way we lift each other up, one story at a time."

NSA (NAPPS) Has just released a useful collection of articles and essays about storytelling in the classroom. *Tales as Tools: The Power of Story in the Classroom* (Jonesborough, TN: The National Storytelling Press, 1994; \$19.95 paperback) contains, by my rough count, around 23 reprints of articles from *Storytelling Magazine* and *Yarnspinner* and 15 original articles by folks such as Penninah Schram, Elaine Wynne and Gail DeVos. For example, school principal Jay Stailey talks about infusing the entire school with storytelling from the top down; Syd Lieberman writes about brainstorming for personal stories with teens; Rex Ellis writes about using story to connect with history. Sheila Daily has done a good job in pulling diverse articles and essays together to

form a coherent whole. The book's 13 chapters include treatments of "using Stories to Teach History," "Using Stories to Teach Science and Math" and "Stories and Healing," along with the usual language-based suggestions. The book has no index and the table of contents gives no clues as to the titles of the articles or their authors, so searching for a specific piece is difficult.

Ruth Stotter has just self-published a delightful little collection of her own essays about storytelling. *About Story: Writings on Stories and Storytelling 1980-1994* by Ruth Stotter (Stotter Press, 1994; \$12.95) includes some interesting reflections and useful articles shining light from the folklorist's world onto the contemporary storytelling arena. All of these had been previously published in journals, but I had missed many of them, and all bear re-reading. Ruth writes on the problems of interpreting stories from other cultures, she comments on revivalist storytellers, writes on storytelling performance, suggests classroom uses of story, and talks of adapting stories for telling. Plenty of food for thought in the 22 essays here. (Stotter Press, P.O. Box 726, Stinson Beach, CA 94970; \$12.95). Her *1995 Storytelling Calendar* is ready now too. The calendar costs \$10 + \$2 mailing.

And since this column is about the *folk* as well as the stories, I'll share an exciting novel I just finished. *Donald Duk* by Frank Chin (Minneapolis: Coffee house, 1991; \$9.95 paperback) takes us through an electrifying 15 days and nights of San Francisco's Chinese New Year with 12-year-old Donald Duk. Chinese mythology, in particular the folk heroes of *The Water Margin*, move in Donald's dreams and come alive in the Chinese opera troupe which his restaurateur father hosts for the New Year season. A lively and intense coming of age novel, full of wit and wisdom. I read it twice.



Calendar of Events

January



- 5** Storytelling with **Deborah Hudson**, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books, 15788 Redmond Way, Redmond, WA 98052.
- 9** Tacoma storyteller **Susan Blaine** shares her tales at **Second Mondays on the Hill**, Seattle Storytellers' Guild Monthly Storytelling Event, 7 p.m. New City Theatre, 1634-11th Ave., Seattle, \$4 SSG/\$6 general.
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- 29** **Stacia Keogh** performs for Bellevue Regional Library Story Corner, 1:30 p.m. 1111-110th Ave. NE, Bellevue, WA 98004, 450-1775. Please register to attend.

February



- 2** Storytelling with **Deborah Hudson**, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books, 15788 Redmond Way, Redmond, WA 98052.
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- 10** **Susan and Rene Harvey** share stories at Borders Bookstore in Tacoma Mall, 7 p.m.

13 Livin' and Lovin': **Debra Harris Branham and Phyllis Silling** tell stories to celebrate the season at **Second Mondays on the Hill**, Seattle Storytellers' Guild Monthly Storytelling Event, 7 p.m. New City Theatre, 1634-11th Ave., Seattle, \$4 SSG/\$6 general.

16 **Jackie Torrance** tells at Tacoma Public Library Main Branch. Free! Call (206) 591-5666 for information.

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11 **Debbie Dimitre** performs "Cleopatra," 2 p.m., Mountlake Terrace Library, 2300-58th Ave. W.

13 Personal stories from a New Zealand childhood: **Kevin Cotter** shares stories from Down Under at **Second Mondays on the Hill**, Seattle Storytellers' Guild Monthly Storytelling Event, 7 p.m. New City Theatre, 1634-11th Ave., Seattle, \$4 SSG/\$6 general.

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Co-Presidents: Cherie Trebon (525-0382) and Dawn Kuhlman (939-7117);
 Vice President: Margaret Read MacDonald (827-6430);
 Secretary: Gene Friese (284-9469);
 Membership and Festival Directors: Debra Harris-Branham (772-0415) and Phyllis Silling (246-7636);
 Newsletter Editors: Susan Veltfort (322-2385) and Julie Miller (935-1471);
 Publicity: Kathleen Sider (524-1485);
 Volunteer Coordinator: Avis Jobrack (206-863-5025);
 Programs: Camille Wooden (854-2909).

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 the expiration date on your label. Deadline for the Spring issue is March 1, 1995.

*Design by Julie Reimer
 634-0813*

Membership Form

Name:	
Address:	
City:	State:
Zip Code:	
Phone:	Date:
New: _____ Renewal: _____	
____ Individual, \$15	
____ Family, \$20	
____ Institutional, \$30	
____ Donor, \$35	
____ Lifetime, \$150	
____ Muse, over \$150	
____ 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, WA 98145-0532.

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