

in the Wind

Seattle Storytellers' Guild • Summer 1995 • Vol. XVIII, Number 3

Reflections

Remembering Gene

By Sally Porter-Smith

(Gene Friese, long time Seattle Storytellers' Guild member and board member died March 10, 1995. The author, a librarian for the King County Library System met Gene over ten years ago when he provided storytelling for the libraries she worked in. Later, they worked together on the Seattle Storytellers' Guild Board. They also, on occasion, shared the stage. This article is more a series of reflections on the many contributions of Gene than a formal obituary.)

This winter I received a call telling me that Gene Friese wished to donate books and storytelling materials to the King County Library System. I was asked to help move the materials from his apartment to our library's administrative center. Walking into Gene's apartment, knowing he was lying in a bed in the hospice unit of Providence Hospital, felt like a terrible, even if necessary, invasion of his privacy. Gene's best friend,
(continued on page 3)

Why Tell Stories?

A Personal Perspective

By Cheri Trebon

As a storyteller I am frequently asked, "Why do you tell stories?" For a long time my reply resembled a mini-lecture on the ancient art of storytelling, the value of the oral tradition, the enjoyment I derive from interacting with the audience, the need to reawaken the imagination in listeners. The answer, however, always seemed to fall short. A few years ago an event occurred during a performance that has remained with me. Now when people ask "why stories," I reply by telling the following story.

I had been publicly performing stories for about three years when I was asked to do a program based on mythology for a language arts class of freshmen high school students. I was extremely apprehensive. Having two teenagers of my own I knew what a "tough sell" they could be. I was afraid the students wouldn't listen, or that they

would laugh at my attempts; I was afraid I would fail and be embarrassed. But I prepared as well as possible and tried to relax. I knew the stories were good; I would just have to let them take over.

And they did! Three minutes into the performance I knew that I "had" my audience and they remained with me throughout the entire 40-minute program. One girl in particular watched and listened intently. I had purposely left enough



time in the program for questions, assuming they would revolve around the stories and mythology in general. A few did, but the students seemed more interested in the art of storytelling itself.

(continued on page 2)

Why Tell Stories?

(from page 1)

The intent young woman raised her hand. She wanted to know why I had become a storyteller. I told the students of a story about a bag lady which I had read many years before which touched me so deeply that it changed my life in several ways. Feeling that the story needed to be shared, I became a storyteller, overcoming shyness and a desperate fear of public speaking in order to tell it.

The students pressed me further. Would I tell them that story? I looked for confirmation from the teacher and, receiving it, told the story of "Rose." When I finished there was a stunned silence and tears ran down the faces of many students. Then the room seemed to

explode with applause. The bell rang and the students went on to their next class.

As the teacher escorted me out of the building, she spoke about the girl who had listened and questioned so intently. The teacher was surprised at the girl's reaction to the stories for she had previously displayed no interest in school, was failing badly and at risk for dropout. The teacher was impressed that the storytelling had so obviously sparked interest in the girl.

I left the school feeling very satisfied. About two weeks later the teacher telephoned. She told me that subsequent to the storytelling program she led the students in a discussion about the stories and about the

classwork in general. It was quarter-end and a good time to evaluate. To the teacher's amazement, the intent young woman raised her hand and admitted to her classmates that she hadn't bothered to do any reading all quarter. She went on to say that during the storytelling performance she realized that learning could be fun and that from then on she was going to take an active part.

I continued to receive updates concerning that student. She made a turnaround that year and has since completed high school.

The power of stories—that's why I'm a storyteller.

Seattle Storytellers' Guild April 1995

	Expenses	Income
NAPPS	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Archive	0.00	0.00
New City	0.00	0.00
Festival	0.00	0.00
Library	0.00	0.00
Mailing/postage	0.00	0.00
Membership	0.00	175.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	8.17
Newsletter	0.00	0.00
Petty cash	0.00	0.00
Resources	0.00	0.00
Story 'N Snack	0.00	0.00
Special Events	0.00	0.00
Workshops	0.00	80.00
TOTAL:	\$ 0.00	\$263.17
NET:		\$263.17
Bank Balance, March 31, 1995:	\$6,714.03	
Bank Balance, April 30, 1995:	\$6,977.20	

Tales of Seven Princesses

International performer Laura Sims will be in Olympia on July 19th and 20th. On both evenings she will present a storytelling entitled "Tales of Seven Princesses." Cost will be between \$10 and \$15. She will also conduct a workshop on July 20th at 1 p.m., "Creating a Story on the Mythic Basis." Location has not yet been confirmed. For more information and reservations, call Fran White, 360/894-3949.



Remembering Gene

(from page 1)

Connie Hayden, who was responsible for distributing his belongings, worked with me. Her every action demonstrated a love and respect for Gene that made the task doable. Through Connie, I came to understand how loved and respected Gene was by the librarians, teachers, district staff and administrators of the Highline School District. I left Gene's apartment with more than books, I left with a greater appreciation of and understanding of how one man can make a loving difference in the lives of so many people.

Standing in his apartment, I was impressed by how Gene had created a home reflecting his values and his passions. Books, diverse types of art collections, and specially boxed materials filled his apartment showing an eclectic range of interests. Here one could see the manifestation of his love of literature, the performing arts, storytelling, Shakespeare, Lewis Carroll's Alice, music and reading. Art work could be found on almost every wall, including framed pieces of work created by the children who listened to his stories. Those of us fortunate enough to have watched Gene work with children know he had a special relationship with children. We could list his performances for children, we could recall his many activities seeking to improve the quality of children's lives; yet, his home intimately reflected how he valued their opinions and feelings and how his relationships with children enriched his life.

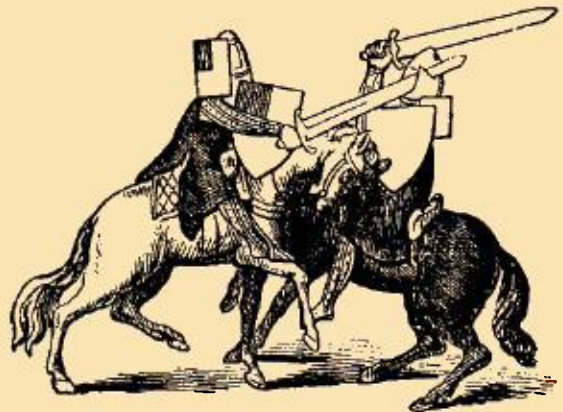
Gene gave the library over eighty boxes of materials he used in his storytelling. Each box included a

label identifying the subject matter enclosed. As Susan Veltfort and I made the inventory of the boxes, we were overwhelmed by the magnitude of Gene's gift. He had not just left us books, he had left us a part of him, for here in his organization he brought together a regalia of materials - all personally selected by him. He included books of all types - picture books, nonfiction titles, literary tales and folklore collections which he combined with figurines, talking sticks, puppets, toys and crafts. Here we found three boxes of bear books with extravagant realia, two boxes dedicated to the tales of King Arthur, another celebrating jungle animals and others stressing the importance of self esteem, the benefits of reading aloud to children and even one on identifying and using archetypes in storytelling. In each box we recognized Gene.

Recently I was talking to Naomi Baltuck and she said of Gene, "He was the first storyteller I knew." I wondered, for how many people is this statement true? We may have heard many storytellers, but how many of these tellers could we approach comfortably with our praise, our enthusiasm and our questions? Gene's caring, nurturing way allowed us to know him and he gave us permission to think about how we might become storytellers in our own lives. Gene encouraged us. He taught us and he shared in our process of finding stories and making them our own so we could share those stories with others. He grew with us. Gene brought storytelling into the

realm of the every day — in school classrooms and auditoriums, in libraries and bookstores. We saw how storytelling could enrich even the most ordinary day. How many of us now incorporate storytelling in our daily lives? How many of us would be doing this if it were not for Gene?

Ardent bibliophile, patron of the arts, teacher, administrator, storyteller, board member, volunteer, traveler, colleague and friend — all these words described Gene. The common thread connecting these different roles in life is the way Gene approached them. To every



task he brought his integrity. A gentle, in many ways quiet man, he surprised more than one person with some of his fierce storytelling characters. Gene was the Willy Nilly Man, Loudmouth Frog and Wiley's Hairy Man. For those of us fortunate enough to have heard him tell these stories the mere mention of these characters will forever conjure up images of Gene telling the stories. For those of you who didn't hear Gene tell these stories, I'm sorry. You missed something special.

(See related article on pg. 10)



Sources: About Stories and the Folks Who Tell Them

By Margaret Read MacDonald
King County Library System

Seattle's authors have been hard at work this winter. Here are four new books from our own members!

Fair is Fair: World Folktales of Justice

Sharon Creeden

(August House, 1995)

Sharon presents us with 30 folktales on themes of law and justice. And she follows each story with fascinating commentary drawing lines from the story's legal issue to other cases, some contemporary, some drawn from the literature of antiquity. An intriguing read. And some great stories to expand your repertoires, too! Ask for it at your local library, and make sure they order it. Or better yet, buy a copy for yourself and one for a friend! Hardback, \$19.95.

Tell It By Heart: Women and the Healing Power of Story

Erica Helm Meade

(Open Court, 1995)

In this remarkable book, Erica takes us with her as she uses story in therapy. Each episode engages us with a set of healing individuals who find new ways to envision their own lives as they look through the lens of story. This book provides much useful advice for the therapist-storyteller. But it is much more than just a how-to manual or a set of case studies. The lovely writing and the strong heart of this book give us all hope in the ability of the broken to

heal. And they point a path of responsibility for all who use story. Though few of us will use story in professional therapy, we all should learn with Erica to choose our stories wisely, then stand aside and thrust them to do their work. This book should be read by all storytellers, educators, ministers and healers. I am passing a copy on to my daughter, who teaches troubled inner-city third graders; to my mid-life neighbor, who copes with desperate personal issues; and to my elderly parents, who just love a good, inspirational read. For September release. Paper, \$16.95, cloth \$38.95. Ask for it at your library and bookstore.

Strongheart Jack and the Beanstalk

Pleasant DeSpain

Illus. by Joe Shlichta

(August House, 1995)

Pleasant's first picture book is out in July as a part of the new August House children's line, "Little Folk." He has gone back to very early versions of tale for his retelling. Those who have trouble with Jack's role as a thief will like this version, which stresses the giant's theft from Jack's father and shows Jack as a hero regaining his own family fortune. A wise cat who accompanies Jack adds to the pleasure of this new telling. Hardback \$15.95.

The Old Woman Who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle

Margaret Read MacDonald

Illus. by Nancy Dunaway Fowlkes

(August House, 1995)

And MY first picture book, too! Also in the "Little Folks" line. A very tellable version of this British tale, with a perky fairy and lots of visual fun from artist Nancy Fowlkes. My hope is that after folks have read it a few times it will jump into their mouths and start telling itself.

So, your Seattle tellers have been busy this year. And I happen to know that Naomi Baltuck is busy on another collection, too. We are waiting!

Especially for Members:

Second Mondays on the Hill

Every second Monday of the month the Seattle Storytellers' Guild offers its members an evening of stories at the New City Theatre on Capitol Hill. Great stories in an intimate theater, coffee and cookies and a chance to share a tale or two of your own as well, make these evenings one of the reasons you are a Guild member. Mark those second Mondays on your calendar today and don't miss out on some of the best storytelling to be had around Puget Sound.

Our summer line-up, coordinated by Camille Wooden, promises some unusually exciting stories brought to us by fine tellers from far and near.

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

July 10

Sharon Creedon. Sharon's light-hearted tales from her book, *Fair Is Fair: Folktales of Justice*, include the "Three Little Pigs" in legalese and the "Old Bachelor from Ballard." Her stories, most recently told at the American Library Association Convention in Chicago and at the Folklife Festival in Seattle, have been collected since she left the practice of law 13 years ago.

August 14

Story People from Port Angeles: A group of tellers will journey from the Olympic Peninsula to bring us "Stories for a Summer Night." These tellers' tales include original stories, literary tellings, folktales and, perhaps even a bit of living history from the area.

September 11

Antoinette Botsford comes to Seattle from Orcas Island to tell us about "Great Aunt Amaline's Bone Necklace." This true ghost story of forbidden love will soon be toured by Antoinette for the Utah Arts Council. Antoinette began her storytelling career as a 10 year old and has told professionally for the past eight years. Her stories are drawn from her French Canadian and Indian heritage.

Second Mondays on the Hill are held at the New City Theater, 1634 11th Ave., (located diagonally across from REI). Free parking available. Stories begin at 7 p.m. An open mike is available after the featured performance. SSG members, \$4, non-members \$6.

Guemes Island Storytelling Retreat

With Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald
Saturday, July 14, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Learn six short audience-participation folktales
- Techniques for researching folktales and folklore
- Short cuts to easy tale learning
- Hints for tale performance
- Integrating multicultural folktales and other folklore items into the whole language classroom

The \$60 fee includes ferry and lunch. One credit is available through Seattle Pacific University. \$30 credit fee.

A follow-up session is required of all SPU credit students. Follow-up

sessions are held both on Guemes and in the Seattle area for the convenience of students. You may attend either. Our tentative follow-up ate is Friday, July 28.

Guemes Island: Guemes is a 10-minute ferry ride from Anacortes. Anacortes is an hour and a half drive north of Seattle. A map will be sent to you when you register.

For more information call 206/827-6430. To register send \$30 to: Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald
11507 NE 104th St.
Kirkland, WA 98033.

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July



- 1** Bringing Folktales to Life, 10:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books, 15788 Redmond Way, Redmond.
- 1-2** Happy Endings, Tales Told By Two: storytellers Debbie Deutsch & Cindy Easterson team up to present their delightful "Story Camp" at Redmond's Heritage Festival, Marymoor Park, 1 p.m.
- 5** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 1:30 p.m., Burien Library, 14700 6th Ave. S.W.
- 6** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 2 p.m., Fairwood Library, 17009 140th S.E., Renton.
- 6** Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.
- 10** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 7 p.m., Black Diamond Library, 360/886-1105.
- 10** Second Mondays on the Hill: Sharon Creeden 7 p.m. See page 5 for more information.
- 11** Skagit Valley Storytellers Guild, at the Burlington Community/Senior Center (first Tuesday of every month). For information call 360/755-0102.
- 11** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 1 p.m., Woodinville Library, 788-0733.
- 12** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 2 p.m., Northeast Library, 6801 35th Ave. N.E.
- 13** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 2 p.m., Algona/Pacific Library, 833-3554.
- 13** Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

- 19** Storytelling: A Family Affair, 7 p.m., Puss 'N Books.
- 19-20** Tales of the Seven Princesses, by international performer Laura Sims, in Olympia. For more information and reservations call Fran White, 360/894-3949.
- 20** Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.
- 20** Creating a Story on the Mythic Basis, a workshop conducted by Laura Sims, 1 p.m. in Olympia. For more information and reservations call Fran White, 360/894-3949.
- 22** Harvest Moon: Stories from the Quinalt, 10:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.
- 26** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 7 p.m., Des Moines Library, 21620 11th Ave. S.
- 27** Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 7 p.m., Foster Library, Tukwila, 242-1640.
- 27** Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.
- 27** Story 'n Snack potluck dessert and story swap at Sharon Creeden's, 7:30-10 p.m. Call 935-2850 for information and directions.

August



- 3** Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

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8 Story Camp, 1 p.m., presented by Debbie Deutsch and Cindy Eastermen at Wallingford Boys and Girls Club, B.F. Day Elementary in Fremont.

8 Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 1:30 p.m., Columbia Library, 4721 Ranier Ave. S., Seattle.

10 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

10 Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 3 p.m., Federal Way Library, 320th St., Federal Way

14 Exploits of Annie Oakley, Debbie Dimitre, 7 p.m., Henry Library, 425 Harvard Ave. E. (Capitol Hill).

14 Second Mondays on the Hill: Story People from Port Angeles. See pg. 5.

17 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

24 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

31 Story 'n Snack potluck dessert and story swap at Cheri Trebon's. Call 621-8646 for directions.

31 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

September



7 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

8-10 First Forest Storytelling Festival, Port Angeles. See pg. 9 for more information.

11 Second Mondays on the Hill: Antoinette Botsford. See pg. 5 for more information.

14 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

21 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.

28 Story 'n Snack potluck dessert and story swap. Call 621-8646 for information and location.

28 Storytelling with Deborah Hudson, 11:30 a.m., Puss 'N Books.



OUT of AREA

July 21-23 Sierra Festival, Nevada City, Calif. Featuring the best audience in the world, and Brenda Wong Aoki, Donald Davis, Gay Ducey, Bill Harley, William McLane, and Rosalie Sorrels. Bobby Norfolk is MC. Children's concert by Bill Harley. Critique session by Patrick Ball and Bob Jenkins. Festival followed in July 24 with the 2nd Annual Sierra Storytelling Institute: intensive workshops with Donald Davis, Gay Ducey and Steve Sanfield. Contact NCSACC, 17894 Tyler Foote Crossing Road, Nevada City, CA 95959, or call 916/265-8141. Warning: this one sells out early.

August 9-11 How to Get Published; Pioneer Ranch Retreats. Seminars with Cathryn Wellner & Richard Wright, Cariboo, British Columbia. For information and registration contact Pioneer

Ranch, Box 15 Miocene, Williams Lake, B.C. V2G 2P3, Canada, 604/296-4432, fax 296-4250; registration, 1-800-583-2880.

Aug. 14-16 Storytelling for Educators (see Pioneer Ranch Retreats, pg. 7)

Aug. 21-23 Into Deeper Waters (see Pioneer Ranch Retreats, pg. 7)

Aug. 28-30 Telling Your Story (see Pioneer Ranch Retreats, pg. 7)

Sept. 1-2 Timpanogos Festival, Orem UT

Sept. 6-8 Writing Our Lives—a Seminar for Women (see Pioneer Ranch Retreats pg. 7).

Sept. 8-10 First Forest Storytelling Festival, hosted by The Story People of Clallam County, on the North Olympic Peninsula (WA). (see pg. 9)

Oct. 13-14 San Juan Capistrano Fall Festival with Donald Davis, Diane Ferlatte, David Novak and Jim Cogan.

Oct. 13-14 Talking Island Festival, Honolulu

Storytellers' Northwest Directory, 5th Edition



Past editions of the Storytellers' Northwest Directory have proven to be an invaluable resource for people wanting to find storytellers for performances in schools, festivals, conferences, and private gatherings. The Seattle Storytellers' Guild is pleased that the response to the fourth directory has been so strong, that a fifth edition, with updated information, is needed. Included in this newsletter is an application for inclusion in the fifth edition.

Listing in the directory is free. Storytellers who would like to advertise in the directory may at minimal cost purchase space for one of three size advertisements - business card size for \$25.; half page size ads (4.75" x 6.50") for \$50; or full page size (7" x 9.75") for \$100.. The directory will be printed in standard 8" x 11 1/2" size format. Deadline for returning the completed application is September 1, 1995. Specific instructions for submitting information and advertisement copy is included in the application.

The Directory will be mailed to other storytelling guilds, schools, libraries, and bookstores. In addition, the Directory will be sold at SSG events beginning with our annual Tellabration celebration in November 1995. Cost of the directory is \$3.00. Please contact Dawn Kuhlman (939-7117) or Sally Porter Smith (283-5984) with questions regarding the application process.



June 22-25

International Playback Conference

Playback theater is an improvisational theater form with many applications for storytelling. The international conference is being held at Evergreen State College in Olympia. For more information call Leticia Nieto, 360/754-6053 or James Lucal, 206/365-2352.

LOOK OUT FOR Tellabration

November 18, 7 p.m.

Again, it will be held at Shaefer Auditorium, Seattle University campus.

More information will be in the next newsletter.

NOTICE!!!

Seattle Storytelling Guild's Annual Fall Festival has been moved to SPRING!

First Forest Storytelling Festival

Port Angeles, Wash., on the Olympic Peninsula, will be the site of a three-day festival this fall. Mark your calendar for Sept. 8, 9 & 10 to attend this international event. The festival will open with a concert of Native American stories on Friday night and will conclude with a singalong on the City Pier on Sunday afternoon.

Many of the tellers are well known to Northwest storytelling audiences. Ed Stivender has been featured at the National Storytelling Festival as well as numerous regional events. He is known for his unique renditions of fairy tales with a comic twist and participatory improvisations. He also shares the humorous moments of life in his coming-of-age stories. What follows is the schedule as we know it now...

Friday, Sept. 8

Registration, 8 a.m.
Opening 8:30, announcements, introductions, welcome

Workshops, 9 a.m.
(concurrent)

Johnny Moses
Margaret Read MacDonald—for Educators
Pleasant DeSpain—for Business Professionals

Workshops, 10:15 (concurrent)

Ed Stivender
Antoinette Botsford
Margaret Read MacDonald—Children as Tellers

Afternoon Concerts

1:00 Johnny Moses
2:00 Pleasant DeSpain
3:00 Ed Stivender

4:15 Todd Moore—"In the Heart of the Wood," a one-man docu-drama about the problems surrounding people and forests

Evening Concerts

7:30 Ed Stivender, or

8:00 Ghost Stories, featuring Pleasant DeSpain, Margaret Read MacDonald, Antoinette Botsford, Johnny Moses, Melanie Ray, Kate Stevens, David Kaetz and Ann Glover

Sunday, Sept. 10

11 a.m. Inspirational Stories, all tellers
Canadian Tellers

1:30 David Kaetz, Ann Glover

2:30 Nan Gregory, Melanie Ray, Kate Stevens

Concerts at the Fine Arts Center

3:00 Antoinette Botsford

3:30 Todd Moore, "In the Heart of the Wood"

5:00 Song Fest at City Pier, Ed Stivender

The cost for the complete festival is only \$55

for early registration. Individual concerts and workshops are priced at \$5 to \$10. To register, send check or charge information to Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce, 121 Railroad Ave., Port Angeles, WA, 98362, phone 360/452-2363. They will also be glad to send you information on lodging.

Want more information on the festival? Call Josephine Pederson, 360/457-3169 in Port Angeles, or in Seattle, Pat Peterson, 206/935-5308, before 9 p.m. please.





Gene Friese Scholarship Award

The Seattle Storytellers' Guild working with other Pacific Northwest storytelling guilds and staff and former staff of the Highline School District are collecting funds to create an annual storytelling scholarship to be awarded in Gene's honor.

The scholarship could be used by the selected individual to attend storytelling workshops, classes, or festivals. The Fall newsletter will contain detailed information about the scholarship and an application for the 1996 award. If you would like to contribute to this fund please send your checks to the Seattle Storytellers' Guild, P.O. Box 45532, Seattle, 98145-0532. Checks should be made out to the Seattle Storytellers' Guild with the designation, "Gene Friese Scholarship" on the bottom of the check.



A Bulgarian Culture Day Camp August 19 Woodinville

Organizers are looking for Bulgarian folk tales (and tellers thereof), music, songs and folklore. Planned activities for preschoolers, school age teens adopted from Bulgaria and their parents and siblings. Contact Terry Mandeville, 823-8018 or reach her on the internet at TerryMand@aol.com.

All For Kids Relocated

All For Kids books and music has moved from 2943 NE Blakely to 2900 NE Blakely, next door to Village Kids and across the street from Plenty of Textiles. For more information, please contact Rene at 526-2768.

Dear Seattle Storytelling Guild Friends:

On July 22, 11 a.m.-dark, taq^wsəblu is inviting you to join together with many others at Upper Skagit—Highway 20 near Sedro Woolley (turn left on Helmick Road, dead end to the tribal center).

I am calling this an Adopt A Story gathering. Choose your favorite (10-15 min.) story—honor and acknowledge the one who first left the story for us. Memorize and practice the story in front of a mirror until the original teller is pleased with your presentation, then come and tell it at Upper Skagit.

There will be two areas for our storytellers: one stage for our First People and one for others. This event will be potluck as our ancestors did long ago to share whatever we had to put on the table.

It is my hope to make this an annual affair in July so that our stories may be saved by all of us working together to keep them a live by repeating them in our traditional way—by telling them.

The videotaped sessions will be packaged and available for purchase to fund the next event. Lushootseed publications will also be available for purchase at these gatherings.

Books containing historical information left for us through the wisdom of our precious elders Susie Sampson Peter and Ruth Shelton will be ready for you to purchase. I think they will become required reading for every educator (and for each and every political candidate running for office).

tul^əal (from)

Vi (taq^wsəblu) Hilbert

Director, Lushootseed Research

Unraveling Rumpelstiltskin

Politically Correct Variants of Well-Worn Stories

By Martha J. Eshelman-Smith

Last year's best seller, *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*, has been followed by its sequel *Once Upon a More Enlightened Time* (both by James Finn Garner). Reading contemporary retellings of stories whether humorous, serious or poetic can focus a teller on the critical elements of a story—on those elements which a listener depends upon to recognize a story in all its permutations.

"Rumpelstiltskin" provides some interesting insights. In Garner's version the exploitive nature of the girl's position—her father's spreading of false rumors of her talents spinning straw into gold and the prince's demands that she fulfill those rumors for his financial gain—are emphasized. Rumpelstiltskin gives advice in exchange for her firstborn—again exploitation—and stamps his foot when his name is discovered. The fact that the straw was "spun into gold" through marketing thatched roofs rather than through magic does not make the story less recognizable. Rather, it adds to the political humor of the rendition.

In *Existential Folktales* (by Margaret Switzer) the tale is set in south Texas. The father boasts his daughter is a "good luck charm" to a high rolling gambler. "Rumpelstiltskin" is a card shark who makes it appear to be true. Father tries to marry daughter off to satisfy gambling debt; card shark gambles

back wages on her guessing his name. She fails; he kills the gambler and they run off to marry and "live happily ever after." To recognize the story as "Rumpelstiltskin" without the benefit of the name would be harder than with the Garner version. However, royalty can clearly be exchanged for mere wealth and guessing the name—successfully or unsuccessfully—is clearly sufficient to bring Rumpelstiltskin to mind.

Anne Sexton's "Rumpelstiltskin" (in *Transformation*) in contrast leaves all the traditional components of the Grimm brothers' tale intact. Rather she amplifies an implied psychological interpretation of the tale by tagging the dwarf "Doppelganger" and by contemporary references to Truman Capote, Jehovah's Witnesses, Bond Street, etc. In doing so she takes the story out of the "no time/no place" of fairy tales and forces an interpretation of the tale in the here and now. Yet unlike Garner and Switzer, she does not change the tale but rather the context of the tale.

What do these modern variations tell a storyteller? First, unlike variants of other stories, the name Rumpelstiltskin is always retained. Unlike many stories, the power is in the name within the story and apparently outside the story.

Second, the boast and the impossible task are essential. But the content of the boast and task can easily vary as long as greed is the motive and the person caught "holding the bag" (assigned the impossible task, paying the impossible price for its completion) is not the greedy person.

Third, the apparently impossible task is completed with the help, not necessarily magical, of a third person. That person's de-

manded repayment is as "impossible" as the original task but can be satisfied through a successful gamble.

These essential elements are not identical to the motifs (story components) that a folklorist would use to define the tale. Yet, they are the ele-

ments necessary to invoke the story in the mind of the reader/listener, to provide them with a known template to compare, contrast, contemplate, comprehend your version against. Recognizing how little is critical to invoking this response gives the teller substantial freedom to play with the story and to recover some of the freedom of playful stories in an oral culture.



Seattle Storytellers' Guild
621-8646

President: Dawn Kuhlman (939-7117)
Co-vice presidents:
Margaret Read MacDonald (827-6430)
Debra Harris-Branham (772-0415)
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Congratulations to new board members and many, many thanks to the outgoing members for their commitment and hard work!

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 fall issue is September 1, 1995.

Newsletter design by Nancy Blanton, 937-1343

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