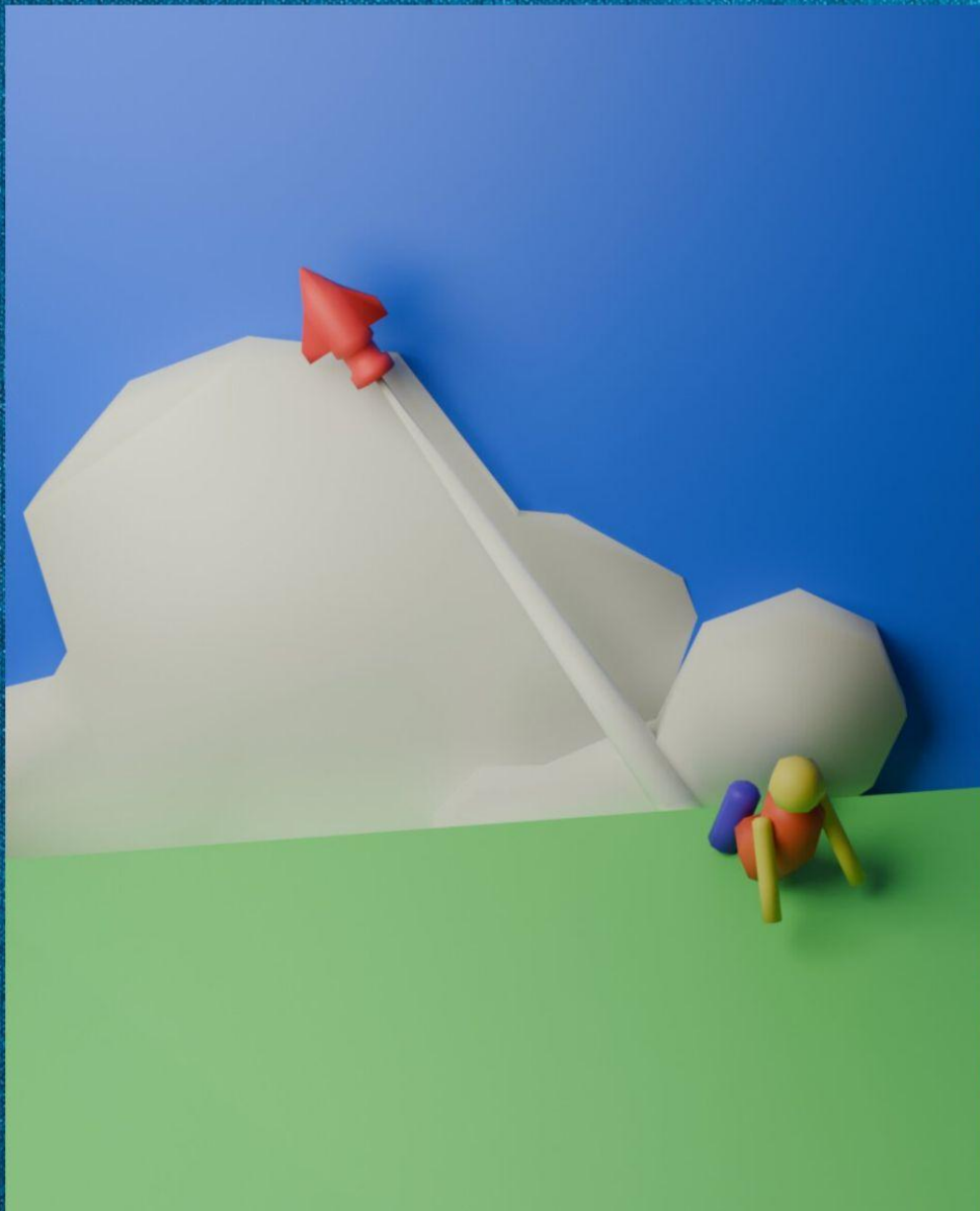


THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

CERULEAN SIGNS





**About the Cover Artist
Joey Fletcher**

Joey Fletcher is an aspiring storyteller and hobbyist illustrator (meaning he likes to doodle). He grew up in his backyard, being told stories and making up his own.

He grew up utilizing his imagination to the fullest. This sparked a lifelong joy of stories and images that accompany them.

He also loves his cat.

[-Instagram-](#)

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**The Story Beast
2026-2027 Themes**


Fall - Cascading Colors - Due August 15

Winter - Merry Musings - Due Nov 15

Spring - Waking Whimsy - Due Feb 15

Summer - Sandy Daydreams - Due May 15





“It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.”

— **Patrick Rothfuss**, *The Name of the Wind*



THE STORY BEAST

Cerulean Sighs

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-LETTERS-

June 2026 WELCOME

When a storyteller passes, where do all of their stories, books, recordings, notes, and source materials go? Often, they are given away or tossed out. What if there was a place to preserve such priceless material for research by future storytellers? Wouldn't it be great if there were a climate-controlled museum/library to preserve storytelling history? Guess what? There is. It's called THE STORYTELLING RESOURCE PLACE (SRP) (oursrp.org), in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Started by Dr. Pam Miller in 2016, the SRP is an independent 501(c)3 organization, separate from the International Storytelling Center. Over 5,000 books and 1,500+ recordings make up the collection so far, in addition to one-of-a-kind storytelling artifacts.

The SRP includes the resources of The Story League (a 100-year organization that shut down in 2021), Dr. Flora Joy's collection, as well as resources and notes from Doug Lipman's estate. A grant funds the Storyteller's Legacy Project, in which interviews of storytelling elders are conducted, and archives of the recordings are kept for research and exploration by future generations. The SRP has launched a Spotlight Series set of interviews, beginning with Ed Stivender. Ed was interviewed live via Zoom and the recording is available to SRP members. A Retreat/Residency program is in the works for folks who would like to spend a week in the Teller Cabin in Jonesborough during a non-Teller-in-Residence week, have full access to the SRP collection, and simply create. For a week of free accommodations and full access to the SRP, the administrators only ask for a performance or workshop at the end of the stay.

For all that they do for the storytelling community, the SRP now needs our help. Tama Lunceford, the current president, is stepping down and someone must take over the reins. Ideally, it would be a northeastern Tennessee resident. However, someone might step in, even as a remote interim president, while SRP staff reassesses their priorities and keeps their current programs running. The SRP has also carved out some activities that can be handled remotely, such as managing the Spotlight Series, supervising the Retreat Residency Program, overseeing Membership activities, and coordinating Volunteer Training. If you have an interest in any of these activities or would like to find out more information, please send an email to storytellingresourceplace@gmail.com or send an inquiry through the SRP website, oursrp.org. You can also visit them if you are in the area at 115 Fox Street, Jonesborough, Tennessee.

Please consider becoming a member of the SRP to support their mission of preserving storytelling history. You can participate in Member exclusives, such as online access to interviews with storytelling elders. To get more details and to sign up, go to oursrp.org. Please support this organization with its eye on preserving the present for future generations of tellers and listeners.

The Story Beast is your quarterly e-Publication forum, and it is your place of community. Please share your creative works -- poems, stories, artwork, or articles -- with us and let your friends know about The Beast. Let us know what you think and send your contributed works to storybeasteditor@gmail.com. The deadline for contributions for the next issue of The Story Beast is August 15 for the Autumn 2026 issue. The Autumn issue's theme is Cascading Colors. Thanks for reading.

May the blessings of summer, like soft breezes, surround us all,

The Spirits of the Beast
storybeasteditor@gmail.com



Dearest Crone:

I want to attract new audiences, but I don't want to compromise my stories or my style. How do I grow my audience without selling my soul?

Charmers, Chancers & Curious Crowds

Dear Charmers, Chancers & Curious Crowds:

So you wish to welcome more folk to your hearth without selling your soul to the first peddler who rattles by in a painted wagon. A familiar predicament. Now listen carefully, because the road is crowded with loud advice and louder fools.

The **Charmers** will tell you to dazzle them into staying.

The **Chancers** will tell you to trick them into arriving.

And the **Curious Crowds**—they are already wandering nearby, if you do not frighten them off by pretending to be someone else.

Let us correct a misunderstanding before it grows teeth: You are not choosing between *integrity* and *audience*. You are choosing between *clarity* and *obscurity*.

Many storytellers lose themselves here. They begin to believe their natural voice is "not enough," so they whittle away its knots and crooked branches until it looks like every other stick in the bundle. More polished. More predictable. More "marketable." And then they are surprised when nothing sticks—least of all in the memory.

Here is what this ol' Crone knows: People do not gather around what is generic. They gather around what is *distinctly alive*.

So the question is not, "How do I sell my soul to reach more people?" The question is, "How do I make my real voice easier to find?" That answer will disappoint the Charmers. It is not a trick. It is not a hack. It is clarity.

Now, the Chancers will insist that compromise is simply a strategy. That if you bend a little more, success will finally behave like a well-trained animal.

And the Curious Crowds? They are not asking you to become someone else. They are asking you to become *findable*. Most artists do not fail from lack of talent or integrity. They fail from the belief that sincerity should automatically announce itself. Sincerity must still be *offered into the world*, not tucked beneath a floorboard and expected to shine through the cracks.

If a strategy makes you feel more like yourself, it may be worth trying. If it makes you feel like a polished imitation of someone else, leave it where it lies. There are already enough excellent imitations in the world. What is rare is a person willing to be precisely themselves — and let that be visible.

Should you wish to wander further into this question, the library shelves offer these Dewey Decimal markers:

● **658.8 808.3 – Marketing:** Seth Godin's *This Is Marketing* — a reminder that marketing is not shouting but serving the people who are already seeking what you make.

● **808.5 – Rhetoric and Persuasion:** Keith Johnstone's *Impro* — a guide to spontaneity, presence, and the courage to stay alive in your own voice.

● **070.4 – Media, Publishing & Public Communication:** Jonah Berger's *Contagious: Why* — useful not for imitation, but for understanding what helps authentic ideas spread.

Walk wisely, storyteller. The road does not require you to become less yourself. It merely asks that you stop hiding your lantern beneath your cloak.



*Yours on the Road -
The Crone of All Crones*

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- Spring - March 2027 - Waking Whimsy - Due February 15
- Summer - June 2027 - Sandy Daydreams - Due May 15

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For **THE STORY BEAST**

September 2026 Issue

Due August 15, 2026

For Submission Guidelines go to

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Submit to storybeasteditor@gmail.com



LIMONADE

-TAMING *the* BEAST-

The Art of Crafting Stories

Storytellers as Transformational Leaders

By Carol McCormick

“Be the change you want to see in the world.” — Mahatma Gandhi

“The followers become leaders and the leader [himself] is transformed.” — James MacGregor Burns

Around the time I launched my storytelling business, James MacGregor Burns introduced the concept of “transformational leadership” in his groundbreaking 1978 book, “Leadership.” Burns described leadership as a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality, motivation, and purpose. Unlike transactional leadership, which relies on rewards and exchanges, transformational leadership changes hearts, values, and even culture itself.

As I reflected on Burns’ ideas, I realized why I had chosen a profession that would probably never make me wealthy in money, status, or power. I became a storyteller because stories nourish something deeper. They nurture faith, hope, love, courage, and connection — not only in listeners, but in the teller as well.

I wanted to spend my life sharing stories that help people remember their humanity and their belonging to one another. In difficult times, stories can keep hope alive. They can help us laugh, grieve, question, heal, and imagine new possibilities. Through storytelling, I have sought to nurture my own spirit while also offering listeners moments of empathy, wonder, and transformation.

When a story is truly alive, listeners do not simply hear it — they feel it. They leave carrying something within them: a little more compassion, courage, or love than they had before.

Stories have the power to help us accept differences, anchor values, build inclusive community, spark curiosity and questions, help people face fears, nurture courage, inspire hope and imagination, strengthen self-esteem, and anchor faith.

Throughout history, transformational leaders have used stories, speeches, and moral vision to inspire collective action. Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded us that civilization depends on learning how to live together in peace. Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi believed ordinary people could change the world. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught that true peace requires justice, while Mother Teresa urged us to remember that we belong to one another.

Storytellers can continue that work through the tales we choose to share.

For accepting differences, stories such as *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Bremen Town Musicians*, and *The Lion and the Mouse* remind us that everyone has value.

To anchor values, stories like *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, *King Midas* and the *Golden Touch*, and *The Empty Pot* encourage honesty, humility, and integrity.

Stories that build inclusive community include Stone Soup, The Mitten, and The Gigantic Turnip. These tales show how cooperation can create abundance and belonging.

To spark curiosity and raise questions, storytellers might share The Emperor's New Clothes, The Blind Men and the Elephant, or The Fisherman and the Genie. Such stories encourage listeners to challenge assumptions and seek deeper truth.

Stories about facing fear and nurturing courage remain especially powerful today. Hansel and Gretel, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, David and Goliath, and Mulan remind us that courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to move through it.

Stories can also help us imagine a better future. A Christmas Carol, The Happy Prince, and The Selfish Giant reveal how compassion and generosity can transform both individuals and communities.

A few stories, however, are like Swiss Army knives: they open conversations about empathy, belonging, power, fear, and transformation all at once. Among my favorites are Fatima the Spinner (Idries Shah), and Two Frogs (a German/Russian fable) that I have adapted to tell. Contemporary storytellers such as Margaret Read MacDonald and the late Doug Lipman also offer stories that invite reflection, healing, and dialogue.

Will you join me in becoming a transformational leader through storytelling? In a world hungry for connection, storytellers can nurture faith, hope, courage, and love — first within ourselves, and then within our communities. The stories we choose to tell may help shape the more compassionate and peaceful world we long for.



To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution



About the Author- Carol McCormick has run a storytelling business for over 35 years. Her clients include festivals, fairs, corporations, professional conferences, early childhood, elementary and high schools, colleges, camps, libraries, museums, hospitals, shopping centers, senior residences, and parks. She is an educational entertainer who has shared stories, programs, and workshops at local, state, and regional storytelling festivals and conferences. Carol has led storytelling, creativity, and writing workshops and been a conference keynote. Before becoming a professional storyteller, Carol was a classroom teacher and corporate trainer. She is the author of the children's book "A Bridge for Grandma." www.carolmccormick.net

Short Public Domain Story Titles for Transformational Leadership

Compiled by Carol McCormick

Accepting Differences

- The Ugly Duckling (Hans Christian Andersen)
- The Elves and the Shoemaker (Brothers Grimm)
- The Bremen Town Musicians (Brothers Grimm)
- The Lion and the Mouse (Aesop)

Anchoring Values

- The Honest Woodcutter (Aesop)
- King Midas and the Golden Touch (Greek mythology)
- The Boy Who Cried Wolf (Aesop)
- The Golden Rule (many cultures and religions)
- The Empty Pot (Chinese folktale)
- The Bundle of Sticks (Aesop)

Building Inclusive Community

- Stone Soup (European folktale)
- The Mitten (Ukrainian folktale)
- Why the Sun and Moon Live in the Sky (West African folktale)
- The Little Red Hen (American folktale)
- Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock (West African folktale)
- The Gigantic Turnip (Russian folktale)

Sparking Curiosity/(Raising Questions

- The Emperor's New Clothes (Hans Christian Andersen)
- Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears (African folktale)
- The Blind Men and the Elephant (ancient Indian parable)
- The Fisherman and the Genie (Arabian One Thousand and One Nights)
- The Star Money (Brothers Grimm)
- King Solomon's Ring (Persian/Jewish folklore)

Facing Fears

- Hansel and Gretel (Brothers Grimm)
- Little Red Riding Hood (Charles Perrault also Brothers Grimm)
- The Three Billy Goats Gruff (Norwegian folktale)
- The Brave Little Tailor (Brothers Grimm)
- Molly Whuppie (Scottish folktale)
- The Juniper Tree (Brothers Grimm -- for older audiences)

Nurturing Courage

- The Brave Little Tailor (Brothers Grimm)
- David and Goliath (Bible)
- St. George and the Dragon (medieval tale from "The Golden Legend")
- Mulan (ancient Chinese folk song)
- The Firebird (Russian fairytale)

Imagining the Future

- Rip Van Winkle (Washington Irving)
- A Christmas Carol (Charles Dickens)
- The Time Machine (H.G. Wells)
- The Happy Prince (Oscar Wilde)
- The Selfish Giant (Oscar Wilde)

Supporting / Growing Self-Esteem

- The Ugly Duckling ((Hans Christian Andersen)
- The Little Engine That Could (1930 version by Watty Piper)
- The Tinderbox (Hans Christian Andersen)
- The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship (Russian folktale)
- The Lion and the Mouse (Aesop)
- Cinderella (many versions, oldest 6th century BCE featuring Greek slave girl Rhodopis)



Some Insights into the Why and How of Presenting an Historic Character

by Joan Leotta

Four stellar historic-person performances at the 2026 Women’s Storytelling Festival (recently completed in Fairfax, VA) alerted me to the differences in presenting characters, to explore what drives this decision to choose a certain character, and how to craft (point of view) the way the character will be shown on stage. I discovered it is also closely allied to the teller’s view of the person they are presenting.

How that all worked in the historic person presentations I observed was marvelously diverse among the four stellar performances I observed in Fairfax, each from the other, and from my own way of presenting such characters. But each of these historic person presentations, in both first and third person, shared an intensity that allowed the audience to deeply understand the character.

Megan Wells presented as Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (Alexander Hamilton’s wife). Kristin Pedemonti told as Marie Jenny Howe, founder of the Heterodoxy Club, (c. 1912) a secret society for women. Denise Page of Ubuntu took us back in time with two personal tales highlighting events from her own family history: “Mariah” for her mother, and “The Archivist’s Gift” about recently discovered ancestors who had attended Yale University in the late 19th century. Lona Bartlett brought us the person of Zitkala-Ša (red bird, aka Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), a Native American activist, suffragette, musician, and author who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I didn’t participate in this year’s festival; however, I took the stage with a similar audience a week later, as Louisa May Alcott, the 19th century author of “Little Women.”

The most important thing I discovered when reading the responses of each of the four Festival presenters to my questions is how closely choice of character and presentation point of view (POV) are related. Below are condensed versions of the responses these tellers gave regarding their choice of character and of how best to present the stories of these women, followed by notes from my own experience



Megan Wells says she chose Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (ESH), a woman who was in her husband’s shadow while he was alive, to focus on this woman whose many achievements both before her marriage and continuing after the untimely death of her husband — the man on our ten-dollar bill. Wells says, “Though I loved the musical Hamilton, I felt very sad that Elizabeth received such a limited role.” Wells adds that she feels great women do not just stand behind great men, but beside them.

Wells, who also performs as various other historic characters, says she tries to present courageous characters in such a way as to inspire not simple awe, but relatability, and to offer motivation for audience members to become their own best selves.

Her portrayal is done in first person and staged in period costume. The character speaks directly to the audience “as if at a dinner table rather than at a podium.” This allows the portrayer to interact and react with the audience in the same way that a living person tells their story. Once on stage, ESH is not “confined” to the time period in which she lived. In fact, several times she speaks directly to the audience (sometimes commenting on the past, sometimes on modern life) with the recognition that she (ESH) died long ago, even looking upwards and speaking to her deceased husband at one point. The character was free to comment on the entire scope of her life, and on our modern world as well.

The costume Wells chose, a dark navy blue period dress and hat (early 19th century), was an outfit Wells had purchased several years several, without having a particular person in mind. But once she started on ESH, she realized it was the ideal outfit — just the right tone of understated elegance — for performing as Hamilton.



Kristin Pedemonti’s portrayal of Marie Jenney Howe took us to the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries as she told us about Heterodoxy, a secret club for women that MJH founded (and why). Pedemonti says, “There are many parallels between life in 1912 and the issues women were facing then, and our current climate in the US.” She goes on to note that she decided to portray Howe after festival Director Jessica Robinson extended the invitation to do an historic character.

“In the past I’ve done snippets of historical portrayals, but for Marie, whom I researched for two and a half years, it seemed really important to tell from her point of view the story of her Heterodoxy club, a group true to the word which means ‘of varied opinions and views’.” MJH founded Heterodoxy to provide a safe space for women to speak their views freely while challenging then-current ways of thinking, especially about the role of women in society as they acted for women’s rights, workers’ rights, and more.

Because there are only a few extant photos of Marie, Pedemonti chose her costume based on general views of the early 1900s and what Howe might have looked like in 1912. Without directly referring to the time gap, Pedemonti broke out of her time period and spoke about contemporary issues, injecting commentary on our current climate. “I felt speaking directly to the audience from the POV of the character is in line with who Marie Jenney Howe was; she would have spoken up and given her opinions if she could have appeared herself. She was an incredible orator and loved satire and parody.”



Denise Page is founder of a storyteller ensemble, Ubuntu Storytellers. All of the artists identify as having Black or Brown ancestry, and share “personal narratives of the skin we’re in,” and also, simply stories of being. In other words, Page explains, “We don’t only tell stories connected to our racial and/or ethnic identities or that people connect to that part of our identity.”

In her historic presentation in Fairfax, she told two tales from a trilogy “Legacy of a Wealthy Slave” she is preparing. One story is set in 1927 and 1939; the other in 2025.

The first, “Mariah,” is a story about her mother as told to her by her mother. Page recounts this moving family story as she was told it. The second part, “The Archivists’ Gift,” is a story about ancestors she never knew existed. A formerly enslaved man, her great-great-grandfather, purchased his freedom, patented an invention, and with his earnings sent two sons to Yale College in the early 1880’s. Page tells the second part of the story in the first person, with quotes from others, which provide an intimacy. As a result of the research for this intricate performance, Page was introduced to family members who were also direct descendants. Archivists doing research for David Blight at Yale reached out to Denise (one of them knew her and her parents) and were the source of the historic gift of this second part of the story.

Her feelings about costume and POV on these personal tales rule the manner of presentation. Page says, “To date I have never told any stories in costume, because my mission is for Black and Brown Americans to be heard in our contemporary authentic voices, even as we share legacy voices.”



Lona Bartlett told the story of Zitkala-Ša (also Zitkála-Šá, aka Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), a Yankton South Dakota writer, editor, translator, musician, educator, and political activist from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Bartlett’s third person telling was wrapped in symbolic references to the character of Zitkala-Ša and the woman’s connection to her Lakota people. Bartlett chose to wrap the story of this woman’s resistance to assimilation and rising above it within a folktale (Iktomi and the Ducks) that mirrors the dangers of losing one’s true self in the process of assimilation, a situation Zitkala-Ša faced, and by playing native flute music. These factors gave us the intimacy of first-person.

Bartlett notes she did not go looking for the character — the character came looking for her. Bartlett says she had given several presentations of this Native activist’s life for schools before coming to the festival with her.

Bartlett performs in regular clothing telling the story to us and notes that even though she is distantly related to this activist Native American, she sought and received permission from the Lakota people to tell the story.

Bartlett’s choice of presenting in regular clothing, instead of trying to imitate Native American period dress or wearing “white” clothing from the 1920s or 30s, and her use of the flute and tale indicate Bartlett’s respect for the character and for Native American traditions. The flute music and folktale created an intimacy with the audience that was far stronger than most third person appearances can offer.

I perform as Louisa May Alcott. In choosing the character of Alcott, a writer who worked in poverty to support her family not only as a writer, but as a nurse, seamstress, governess, teacher, and activist. Not only was her multi-genre writing a point of connection, but also her high value on family. I present LMA in the first person but instead of having LMA come to the present time, I use an MC-read introduction to set the performance date as late summer/early fall 1873, for both audience and character. (This year is just after Alcott returns from Europe and is a couple of years after the publication of *Little Women*. Like my fellow presenters, research into the character fills the script with quotes.

I wear a costume and a wig. Alcott was not much of a fan of hats — or fashion in general. I wear a wig that comes as close as I can to the woman’s own lovely hair. Although to be quite truthful, in 1873 it is likely she was still suffering from mercury poisoning, so her own hair was likely not as luxuriant as it had been. The navy-blue period dress has a small bit of lace at the neck and a sideways cross, which was emblematic of the way in which her family practiced their faith. She talks, then answers questions, and then I take over (using a bit of stage magic to transform into me) and answer other questions about LMA after 1873 and others that would require a perspective on family relationships or issues of the time that were not possible in character.



The four Festival presenters and I offer these three tips for anyone considering a first-person presentation:

1. Choose someone whom you admire. You will be spending many hours researching this person and will be answering questions as this person. Spread a wide net when looking for someone to present — it can be someone in your own family, a feeling or calling to someone you have read about, or simply noting that there is someone out there who merits more stage exposure.
2. Strive to create intimacy between your character and the audience with whichever Point of View — first person or third — you select. The choice depends on what you feel is the most respectful and generous way to present the character, while building an intimate bond with the audience and the character.
3. Costuming as the character is not the only option — both Page and Bartlett found that a deeper respect for the people they were presenting came by NOT costuming themselves in any way, but by appearing in simple contemporary dress.

Before you ask, “Where are the men in this article?” let me remind you that my epiphany about choosing the person to bring to the stage and how to direct one’s point of view in presentation was at a women’s festival. However, the offered wisdom and experiences here can inform the story development of any and every teller, regardless of gender, who practices or is considering taking on historic person performance.

Audience (age, size, and type) is also often a factor in shaping the point of view selected. In this case, each performance was geared to the same or in my case, similar, audience — adults interested in story. Each also had the same amount of time in which to present, and each was in complete control of the stage once they took the mic.

Making decisions on these areas will set up your performance and allow you to offer your audience an in-depth presentation that respects both the character you are inhabiting and the audience. It will enrich both presenter’s and audience’s sense of how individuals have shaped our common history, and, as Megan Wells hopes, perhaps encourage them to follow their own dreams.



About the Author
Joan Leotta (Louisa May Alcott and others, plus a wide variety of folk tales, personal tales, and Greek and Roman myths)
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Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work

–STORYCOLOGY–

Storytelling for Environmental Awareness and Action

“We believe that the future of humankind depends on our stewardship of the Earth and that storytelling plays a major role in educating, informing, sparking conversations, and moving people towards taking actions for a more sustainable world.”





A Story You Already Know

By Bowen Lee

Ok, people say to me. What is it that I can do, right this moment, to reverse climate change? I tell them a story they already know.

Jack and the Beanstalk

The cow was getting to be too much for Jack and his mother to take care of. "We can't afford to take care of the cow, Jack. Go to the market and make sure you get a good price for her."

So Jack did as his mother asked and took the cow to market the next day.

Before he got to the village, an old woman came up to him. "That's a fine cow you have."

"Yes, my mother said to get a good price for her."

"Well," said the old woman, "I have no money. But I'll trade you that fine cow for some... magic beans!"

Magic beans! Oh, yes! Jack traded that cow right away, and the old woman gave him a bag of beans.

Jack's mother saw Jack coming home without the cow. "Jack! You're home early! Did you get a good price for the cow?"

Jack held up the bag.

"Oh, Jack!" said his mother. "Did you get gold? Did you get silver?"

"No, Mother. I got... magic beans!"

Oooo! Jack's mother was so angry, she tossed those beans out the window. Jack and his mother went to bed hungry that night, for there was nothing to eat.

While they slept, the beans grew in the moonlight. They grew and grew and grew, right up into the sky.

When Jack woke up in the morning, he just had to climb that beanstalk. And you know what happened. Jack found the giant's castle with the hen that laid the golden eggs, and he brought it home to his mother so they could live happily ever after.

But let's go back to that cow.



Cows are not only too much for Jack and his mother to take care of, but cows are also too much for the planet to take care of. They need a lot of land, so we cut down forests for them, and they need a lot of water, so we channel water to them and the crops that feed them. Because they don't just eat grass. We like our beef thick and fatty, and for that we feed cows corn and grains, which we have to grow for them with chemical fertilizers. Having meat on our table everyday produces 20% of the greenhouse gases, nitrous oxide, and methane that warm the planet. Transporting that meat to get to our stores, sometimes from overseas, puts carbon dioxide into the air, which makes up 70% of greenhouse gas. Because we have altered the land to raise cattle and taken away ecosystems that naturally pull carbon out of the atmosphere, we have made matters even worse.

But what did Jack trade that cow for? A very good choice! Beans!

Beans are seeds that are highly nutritious. When eaten with grains they make a complete protein that is better for our bodies than meat loaded with saturated fat. Beans are part of the staple diet of all those Blue Zone communities where the people live to over a hundred years old.

Beans are plants that photosynthesize. They take carbon out of the air and put back oxygen. And beans fix nitrogen in the soil, where it helps living things to grow in a rich, productive earth. Beans do not have to grow halfway around the world. They're happy to grow in a container on your porch, or in the local organic farmer's field.

If you don't keep cows and you grow beans instead, you don't need to steal golden eggs from a giant, although that is what it amounts to when you don't buy into the agribusiness of cattle production. With a pot of beans, you can live happily ever after.

So what can you do, right this moment, to reverse climate change? Eat less meat. Buy fresh, local, organic produce. Cook your own meals at home from scratch. Avoid processed, pre-packaged, factory-made foods that have been transported long distances. Eat to change the world.

**From STORIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE
by Bowen Lyam Lee**



Storycology Head Editor

Bowen Lee divides her time between cities, forests, and the ocean around Monterey, CA. She has been a teacher, a writer, an illustrator, and now, she tells stories, incorporating storytelling into all aspects of teaching. She conducts workshops on storytelling to teach educational content in national and regional education conferences.

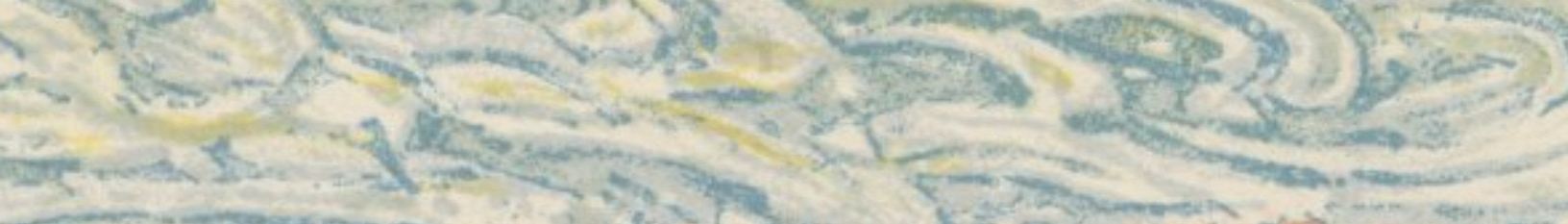
Website: storyrex.com

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.





**-TEACHER TALES &
TENTACLES-**



Teacher Tales and Tentacles Storytelling Across the Cerulean Skies

By Jen and Nat Whitman

Summer vacation is here! For our fellow educators in the northern hemisphere, it's time to give a collective **“Cerulean Sigh”** as we breathe in the glory of summer. This annual pause is also a perfect time to focus on **“Cerulean SKIES.”** Have you ever participated in a **“Blue-Sky Thinking”** session? When you put aside all worries about possible constraints and just ask, **“What are the possibilities?”** Summer is the ideal moment for this, so let's get started!

When we settle into summertime Blue-Sky Thinking, we often revisit the book we wrote with Margaret Read MacDonald, *Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling*. We ask ourselves a series of questions based on the **“Seven C's of Storytelling”** we outlined there. The answers will be different for every grade level and instructional context, but we think the questions can be useful for everyone who values telling in schools.

1. Community

How will we use stories to create community in the first weeks of school? Which tales will be most powerful to return to over the year to reinforce our shared agreements about how we work together? Let's make sure we have those ready to go on day one.

2. Character

What are some tales to keep in our back pocket for telling when we need them this year? What stories will we use when kids are cutting the line to be first? When a group of students struggle with friendship skills? When students give up quickly? We can predict the social-emotional challenges that will arise this year. Let's be ready for them with a pocketful of stories.

3. Communication

How will we intentionally use storytelling to support literacy instruction? Which tales help students develop their sense of rhythm and rhyme? Which will help us focus on metaphorical language? How will we weave storytelling into the writing process? With a little planning, we can use storytelling strategies to level-up our literacy instruction.

4. Curriculum

How will we harness storytelling in other areas of the curriculum? Which tales might connect with computational thinking? What stories will help students build ecological literacy and inspire our learners to support the health of the planet? Let's look at our units for the coming year and get creative about how to bring narrative into all areas of instruction.

5. Cultural Connections

How will we highlight and honor the rich tapestry of identities in our classrooms? What communities are represented in our schools? What other languages are spoken by our students? Let's find tales that will offer mirrors and windows to all of our students in the coming year.

6. Creativity

How will we give students opportunities to craft their own stories? How can we encourage flexible thinking with narrative games? Storytelling provides the perfect opportunity to blast creativity into our classroom spaces. Let's be ready to take risks and encourage our students to do the same.

7. Confidence

How will we structure opportunities for students to develop their unique voice through storytelling? How will students share their stories with each other? How will we celebrate students when they do? Let's get ready to support our students as they share their stories with the world.

The dreaming we do this summer sets our learners up for success in the coming year. We wish you a wonderful season of Blue-Sky Thinking! As we close, we have one more "Cerulean Sigh" to share. It has been such a pleasure to contribute to the Teacher Tales and Tentacles section of The Story Beast for the past two years. Now it's time to pass on the "tentacles" to other tellers. We are grateful to the creative team at The Story Beast for welcoming our voices and we're grateful to YOU for reading. We look forward to the wisdom we'll find here in the future!

One more quick tale before we go.



About the Authors

Jen and Nat Whitman recently moved back to the United States after 23 years teaching and telling in international schools in Thailand, Germany, and Hong Kong. Jen is an Early Childhood teacher and Nat is an Elementary Librarian. They teamed with Margaret Read MacDonald to write a "How-To" guide for using stories in the classroom called, *Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling*. Jen and Nat perform in tandem together as The Whitman Tellers. They are currently sharing stories of political cooperation across the 50 States with a series of social media shorts called "Purple Minutes" for the Purple Points Project. You can learn more about the Whitmans at www.whitmantellers.com.



The Golden Key

A German Folktale

*(Retold from Grimm. For another retelling and more notes on variants, check out *Three Minute Tales* by Margaret Read MacDonald.)*

On a cold and snowy day, a little girl looked for firewood in the forest. As she reached for a stick, her hand fell on a tiny golden key beneath the snow.

What could it open?

She brushed the snow aside and found a tiny, locked chest.

Would the key fit the lock?

It did! The key fit the lock perfectly!

What could be inside?

She turned the key...

What could be inside?

She turned the key...

What could be inside?

She turned the key...

What could be inside?

She turned the key...



What will the golden key of storytelling open in our classrooms this year?
We can't wait to discover the treasure that awaits inside!

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.

-STORY FEAST-

A bounty to share

Latte Coffee Меню

КЛАССИЧЕСКИЙ КОФЕ	
СОТРЕССО (30x60 мл)	200 360 500
АМЕРИКАНО	100 180
КАПУЧИНО	110 140
ЛАТТЕ	150 180 210
ЛАТТЕ-МАКИАТО	150 180 210
ФЛЭТ УАЙТ	150 180 210
РАФ	170 200
ВЕНСКИЙ	160 200 230
ТАРСЕ	160 180 210

СИРЕНЬИЙ КОФЕ 350 ML	
СНИКЕРС	250
БАУЛИ	250
ИМБИРНЫЙ ПИРНИК	250
ПОПКОРН	250
ОРЕО	250
ФИРМЕННЫЙ "ЛАТТЕ"	250
КЛУБНИЧНЫЙ ВЗРЫВ	250

ВОДА - 80	
СОК Я - 180	
АЛЬТЕРНАТИВНОЕ МОЛОКО:	
ОВСЯНОЕ/БАНАНОВОЕ/КОКОСОВОЕ	70p



STORY FEAST

by Karen Chace



We are welcoming in summer with the theme of Cerulean Sighs, so we begin with folktales with a tinge of blue hue.

[Blue Beard – France/Charles Perrault](#)

[The Blue Bird – France](#)

[Blue Cloth and Pearl Deer – Yogur](#)

[The Blue Fairy Book – by Andrew Lang](#)

[The Blue Jackal – India](#)

[The Blue Men of the Minch – Scotland](#)

[Esypttelle and the Blue Yow – Shetland Islands](#)



Resources Provided By Karen Chace

Karen Chace is an award-winning storyteller, teaching artist, workshop leader, and author. Since 2002, she has taught the art of storytelling to over six hundred students. She is the recipient of the LANES Brother Blue-Ruth Hill Storytelling Award and the National Storytelling Network ORACLE Service and Leadership Award.

storybug.net

Once Upon a Generation Recognized

Karen Chace and Andrea Lovett were presented with a State of Massachusetts Senate Official Citation from the office of Senator Michael Rodrigues. This was in recognition of their tenth anniversary producing the *Once Upon a Generation* program in which children performed senior's stories as a first-person narrative. We at THE STORY BEAST would also like to extend our enthusiastic congratulations to Karen and Andrea. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed. You are our unsung heroes. Thank you for all of your hard work and well done.

The Spirits of the Beast



CALENDAR

The Fourth of July celebrates Independence Day in the United States, and we will be celebrating with fireworks and cookouts galore. July 14 is also Bastille Day in France. Below are stories to celebrate France and the U.S.A.

[American Folklore](#) - Celebrate America's birthday and take an armchair journey with folktales, myths, legends, tall tales, and ghost stories from the 50 United States. Tales are clearly indexed so you won't even need to ask for directions.

[The Legend of Johnny Appleseed](#) - What could be more American than Johnny Appleseed? This site offers interesting background information on the real man behind the folklore.

[Nine Facts That Tell the True Story of Johnny Appleseed](#)

[The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault](#)

[The Fairy Tales of Marie - Catherine d'Aulony](#)
Marie-Catherine lived in France during the time of Charles Perrault but her tales were shared in a more conversational style and usually featured a female protagonist. Many of her works were collected by Andrew Lang in his Fairy Books.

[The Enormous Nose - France](#)

[The Poor Sick Mother – France](#)

[Quackling](#) – a French folktale adapted by Aaron Shepard

[Fairy Tales From All Nations](#) –In my continuing search for French folktales I found this free, public domain book. It contains the French tale, Prince Chaffinch, and so more.

Summertime in New England (USA) means fresh crab meat sandwiches. Here are seven delicious tales about these crustacean creatures.

[The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab - Japan](#)

[The Crane's Walk – Aesop](#)

[The Crab Who Outsmarted the Moon - Praslin Island, Africa](#)

[The Heron and the Crab – India](#)

[How the Crab Lost His Head - Ghana](#)

[How the Hermit Crab Won a Race – Micronesia](#)

[The Quarrel of the Tee Monkey and the Crab – Japan](#)

June 18 is Go Fishing Day in the USA. Have fun swimming through the stories!

"Give me a fish and I eat for a day. Teach me to fish and I eat for a lifetime." - Chinese Proverb

[A Fish Story – Australia](#)

[A Small Fish Story – Ireland](#)

[The Fish and the Ring – Germany](#)

[The Girl-Fish – Spain](#)

[The Fish God of Hawaii – United States](#)

[The Golden Fish - India](#)

[The Heron, the Fish and the Crayfish –Ukraine](#)

[How People Learned to Fish – Native American](#)

[The Old Man and the Fish – China](#)

[That Pesky Fellow – Newfoundland](#)

[Why the Fish Has Scales – Philippines](#)

[Why the Fish Laughed – India](#)

August 22 is Be An Angel Day so get ready to fly with these ethereal tales.

[The Angel – Hans Christian Andersen](#)

[The Best Wish – The Stories of Three Brothers and an Angel – Slavic](#)

[Dream Bread](#) – Here are seven variants of the same story from around the world.

[Mary's Child - Grimm](#)

[The Pink – Grimm](#)

[The Wonderful Hair – The Story of a Poor Man Who Dreamed of an Angel - Slavic](#)

[A Woodsman and an Angel – Korea](#)

[The Tsar and the Angel – Ukraine](#)





-JOURNEYS-

**“What marks do you leave in the places you go?
Who sees them?
Don’t you ever wonder?”**



Iwasan Nakata—Okinawa Mystery Man

By John Shockley



It was a strange and large crowd that came to the Kyosan Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles for the memorial service of Iwazo (Iwasan) Nakata. The temple on 1st Street in “J-Town” was large and filled. Nakata had passed away in 1971 after living a full life of almost 90 years.

We thought it would mainly be family at the temple. Some of the Japanese were speaking Spanish. Many were old men whose bodies looked like they had worked a lifetime in the fields. Others were more cultured. Quite a mix!

Because my sansei generation didn’t speak Japanese, partially because of WWII and the resulting stigma of Japanese culture post-war, Iwazo Nakata was a man of mystery. So, who was Iwazo Nakata?

Born in Okinawa’s Kinbu-mura, Kunigam-gun prefecture in 1881, Iwaso had two or maybe three brothers. One brother immigrated to Hawaii with Iwaso. His older brother’s name was Tohachi, born in 1871. There may have been two other brothers who left Okinawa before the 1896 immigration window closed. From family stories, one may have gone to South America and the other to the Philippines.

Iwazo arrived in Hawaii in 1906 with 2,500 other Okinawan men just before the immigration door was closed a year later. Kyuzo Toyama, often called the father of Okinawan immigration, was 14 years older than Iwaso. Kyuzo had taught school in the township of Kin before becoming an agent of Okinawan immigration abroad.

The first group of immigrants left in 1899 and consisted of only 26 men. They went to the main islands of Japan for examination to ensure that they were in good health. Kyuzo had the group meet with the former King of Okinawa, Sho Tai, who ruled from 1848 - 1879. That was when the Meiji government officially annexed Okinawa and made Sho Tai move to the main islands of Japan. With the blessing of the now “Marquis,” the men received two towels and one yen. This blessing was the Okinawan custom when Okinawa was an independent country.

Iwazo’s group was the largest to leave Okinawa and they didn’t go through the formalities of the first group. He was 24 years old when he immigrated to Hawaii with his brother.

Perhaps the honorary name “Iwasan” came because he was a teacher in Kin at the same school where Kyuzo Toyama taught.

At this time, life was difficult in Okinawa and Japan and folks went abroad to find work and to support their families. The sugar plantations in Hawaii offered work opportunities upon arrival. Iwazo and Tohachi worked in the Waipahu plantation.

The work was hard with long hours and not much pay, which differed by ethnic group. Nationalities were separated by camps. Portuguese and Puerto Ricans were paid more than Asian workers from China, Japan, and Okinawa.

In 1909, the laborers went on a three-month strike against the sugar plantations. There were few gains, but the plantation owners did away with some of the discriminatory pay differences by ethnic groups. They also started providing schools, churches, playgrounds, recreation halls, and improved houses for the workers in the plantation camps.

Was Iwazo Nakata one of the organizers of the walk-out? That is unclear, but whereas most of the other laborers were uneducated, he was a teacher and respected.

Improved conditions at the camps gave opportunities for Japanese to write home requesting “picture brides.” Nabe Kaneshiro arrived in Hawaii in 1912 and married Iwazo. She was born in Kinohiki and was eight years younger than Iwazo. She had relatives in the main islands of Japan and visited them while she was growing up. She was 21 years old when she reached Honolulu.

Nabe and Iwazo had their first child, Seiso in 1914. Kamiko followed in 1916, and Masako was born in 1918.

There was another major strike against the plantations in 1920 that lasted five months. When the issues of wage parity and working conditions were settled, the plantation owners knew who the organizers were and removed them from the plantation camps. The Nakatas were probably in that group. The brothers relocated to Waiau near Pearl City. Iwazo and Nabe went back to Okinawa with the children after the strike. Infant Haruko and Nabe returned to Hawaii in 1922. The other Nakata children stayed in Okinawa with relatives. The whole family eventually returned to Hawaii, but the eldest son, Seiso, died in Okinawa, possibly due to small pox. The Nakata family now included Nabe and the children Kamiko, Masako, and Haruko.

Waiau is relatively close to the Waipahu Plantation, but it seems that the two Nakata brothers were trying to start other businesses outside of the plantation. They may have started a nursery, and the brothers may have gotten into a feud.

In 1923, Joji was born in Waiau. Yoshino came along in 1925; and in 1927, Fusae was born.

Iwazo’s family was too large to stay in Waiau, so they moved to Kaneohe onto leased land from Castle & Cooke in 1929. The 18-acre property fronted Lulukū Road, which was more like an unpaved mud trail than a street.

Iwazo cleared land and planted bananas. Part of the land was a taro patch that Nakata sublet to some Hawaiians. The property extended up toward the Ko’olau mountains.

The Depression arrived and Amos “Frank” Cooke drove down the mud road and made Iwazo a proposition. Why not buy the property rather than lease? There were 10 Japanese families in the area. Many bought the land. Iwazo didn’t.

“I go Japan...I rent.” Buying the land would have made the Nakata’s wealthy over time. Iwazo felt strong ties to Okinawa and would later return.



In 1929, Sueko was born and that made the Nakata family total eight. There was lots of farm work to do, and everyone had chores. When the Nakata's moved in, the "farmhouse" was actually three small shed-like structures tied together by an adjoining porch. There was an outhouse and a furo bathhouse separated from the main house.

A stream called the Hanashiro River flowed behind the furo. The Nakata children would catch crayfish and other fresh water fishes when there was some time for relaxation.

Everyone had a chore whether it was coming from the field to light the fire under the metal tank for hot water and the afternoon family bath, to cleaning the house, or to cook. Nabe wasn't a good cook so at eight years old, Haruko took on the job.

Once a month, the family would load up the wagon and make the overnight trip to Honolulu over the Pali road. Iwazo sold crops and bought supplies for the farm.

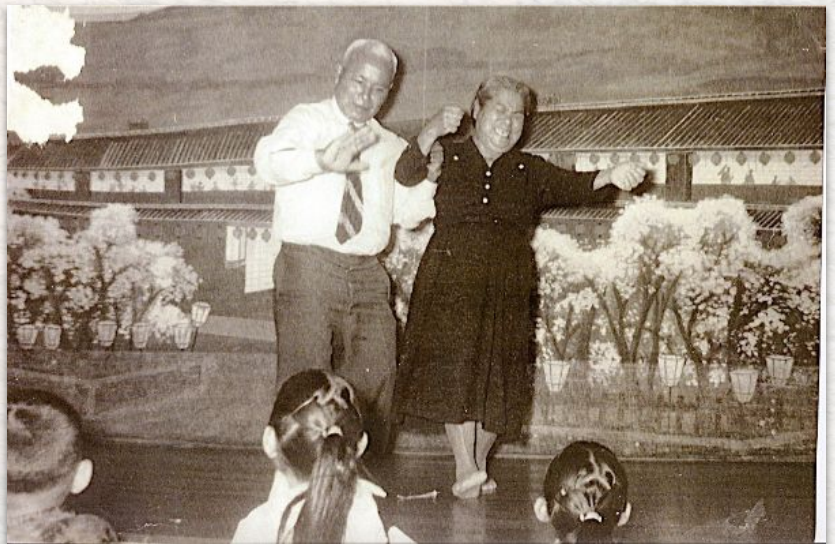
Money was hard to come by and Prohibition was still around. Iwazo took a chance, made a still, and sold "okolehau" liquor to the local Hawaiians. Whether it was the chickens eating the corn mash or just loose lips from the okolehau customers, one day officials came on the property and busted up Iwazo's still. He didn't go to jail because the agents thought the family would be in too dire straits should Iwazo be taken away.

Farm life on Luluku Road was hard. Masako was sent to another family to do housework for extra support for the family. School ended for the children at the seventh grade. The family provided the "free labor" to keep the banana farm running and even expanding.

December 7, 1941, changed everything. Haruko was 20 years old and had made her way to Honolulu to work in the pineapple cannery. Kamiko had left the farm to marry young. The arranged marriage system was falling apart. Masako and Haruko met and married "haole" men. Fusae married a Chinese man.

Iwazo was 59 years old and was struggling on the farm. He was certain that Haruko's husband would desert her after a short time. That didn't happen.

Ray Shockley came to Hawaii in 1938 and worked for the Navy on the round-the-world military radio facility on the top of the Ko'olau Mountains, maintaining the cable car transport from the bottom of the Pali Valley to the high mountain top.



Iwazo sold bananas to the military. Ray helped expand the banana fields. The horse-and-buggy was gone and Iwazo proudly drove his Ford tractor through the fields.

When the war ended, Japan and Okinawa were in shambles. Iwazo wanted to return "home." When he did, he was not given the heroic welcome he thought he would receive. He realized that he no longer belonged in Okinawa — a sad revelation.

Times were so desperate, he returned to Hawaii with just the clothes he was wearing. He left everything else in Okinawa.

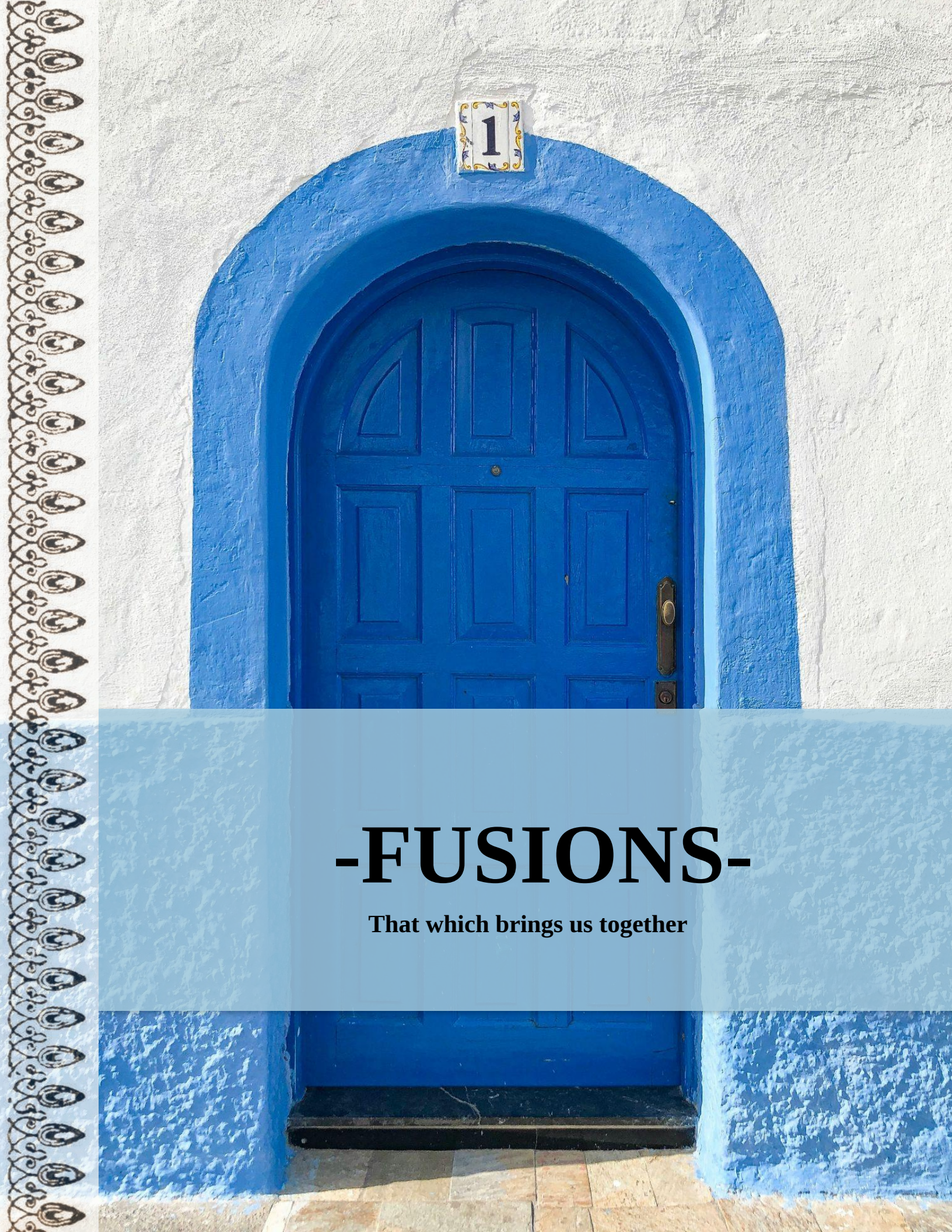
The farm was sold in 1959 and Iwaso, Nabe, Kimiko, her husband and children, and Joji moved to Los Angeles. The family remaining in Hawaii all went to the old John Rogers Airport to wave good-bye as the family flew off in the DC6-B passenger plane. This was the era of propeller-driven passenger airplanes that took 10 hours to reach the mainland from Honolulu.

Once settled into retirement, Iwazo and Nabe traveled north to San Francisco and south to Tijuana, Mexico. Iwazo died in 1971 at age 90. Nabe died in 1982 at 90 years old. A long time has passed and much of the mystery of Iwasan Nakata has been made clearer through written records, but some of the mystery still remains.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author- John Shockley is a freelance writer specializing in short-story fiction, non-fiction, and biographies. He coordinates the Free Access Coalition (FAC), a non-profit organization, whose goal is free public access to beaches, recreational areas, housing, and employment in Hawaii. Shockley graduated from University of Hawaii with a Journalism major. He worked at Anheuser-Busch Inc. for 27 years ending his career at the Los Angeles Brewery as the Plant Manager's assistant in charge of Brewery Communications. His wife, Rita, supports his work with the FAC.



1

-FUSIONS-

That which brings us together

Storytellers for Social Justice

by Jo Radner

In the spring issue of Story Beast, we presented the mission statement and an announcement of a new (inter)national group, Storytellers for Social Justice, who meet online on the last Sunday of each month to support each other and exchange resources. (To subscribe to the free SSJ listserv, contact Jo Radner at jradner@american.edu.)

At the January 25 meeting of SSJ, Judith Black and Bill Harley spoke about the ways they have promoted social justice through their storytelling. They have given us permission to share their talks with Story Beast.

STORYTELLING and Social/Environmental/Racial/LGBTQ [Fill in the blank...] JUSTICE by Judith Black

Why do we love this art form? Because aside from improvisation, it is the one art that constantly calls for us to reshape our stories around the people, place, and time before us. Which is not to say that the motifs, plots, and characters of ancient tales change, but we imbue them with details and character traits that will both

- allow them to resonate in the here and now for the people we are working with, and
- echo our ethical codes.



moving the needle to sane behaviors that might enable us a softer landing in this crisis. I feel a need to insert this issue for both children and adults into any story that could echo it.



About the Author

Jo Radner has been studying, teaching, telling, and collecting stories most of her life, and has performed from Maine to Hawaii to Finland. Professor emerita at American University, Jo returned to Maine as a freelance storyteller and oral historian. She is past president of the American Folklore Society and the National Storytelling Network. **Website:**

joradner.com

You carry yourself into every story you tell. If you have a deep commitment to any flavor of justice (social, enviro, racial, LGBTQ...), you can allow that to shape characters, details, place, and time in a way that will subtly (or not) ask your listeners to consider your concern.

Our climate has already gone haywire. Fires, floods, and droughts have become commonplace, and we often feel a huge level of impotence when it comes to

SO, for instance, when telling the “Three Billy Goats Gruff”:

“They ate all the grass in the valley! That means there was nothing left to grow again. Really irresponsible!”

To the ending:

“They grazed in the meadow, but only ate half of a section and then moved on to the next section, so the meadow could always regrow.”

Or last week, I shared a version with an eye towards immigration:

“The 3BGG lived in Honduras. Because of our climate troubles it is part of a dry corridor. There is not enough rain and the valley and the grass became dry and hard. They had to find a meadow, where it still rained. And there was a bridge, all the way to Eastern Texas where the meadows were green and rain still fell. But under that bridge . . .”

The story didn’t change, but details did, reflecting something I hope children will understand and adults will activate around.

“Hansel and Gretel”: “Their father’s job was to deforest, but back then they called it wood cutting. In those days it was a typical profession. Today, we need to maintain our forests. But that’s another story.”

The conclusion has the children bringing the witch’s pearls and precious stones with them: so that their father never had to fell another tree, and they could live in the peace and richness that is a healthy forest.

Some stories need no extras:

“Jumping Mouse,” which is all about the natural order, inquiry, reciprocity, and sacrifice, is a brilliant story to share in these times. After a story like that you might want to ask questions, simply to draw out thinking about the issues you hope will surface.

- Why were the other mice afraid of him?
- Have you ever run away from something because you did not understand it?
- Jumping Mouse gave his eyes away? Why? Have you ever been willing to give something up to help another being?

“Three Green Ladies”: This story, available in Margaret Read MacDonald’s Earth Care, is about three mighty oaks that grow atop a hill overlooking an old, beloved farm.

When telling this I really drill down on what each tree does to enhance their world: Leaves turning sugar to energy, providing leaf litter to mulch the tree and create a place for insects to live . . . or roots that bind the soil to the earth, stabilizing it and enabling long microbial networks to talk to each other.

We are living in surreal political times. So I shaped the first brother as a child of the ICE culture. “Daaad, I don’t have time to go honor your dumb trees. I’m almost at the next level. Die, die you bad guy!” Then, as a man, “I’m cutting that first tree down. There are bad people, really bad people. Bad people coming here and they wanna rob us and cheat us, and bring bad things here.”

The sister is an advocate for both sanity and the obvious. “But brother, we have never experienced that. These people have even worked on our farm! They are good and kind and hard-working.”

The brother: “Na! I’m cutting down that tree and building a wall, a big wall, a tall wall that they can’t get past, and if they do I’m calling ICE to arrest them.”



About the Author

Judith Black is a professional storyteller, story maker, and teacher/coach with an international following. Originally trained at Wheelock College as an early childhood educator, Judith leapt from the classroom to the stage after training at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. Ultimately she bound these two passions with storytelling and for 35 years has been using story to motivate, humanize, entertain, and teach. Most recently she has turned her attention to the climate crisis.

The story doesn't change, but the details and characters speak to justice issues and the importance of caring for trees. This is not so different from the way Bill Harley has shaped "The Emperor's New Clothes."

We were asked to also share a failure or two while using these techniques. Here's one:

I got a call from the teacher who sponsored the Multi-Cultural Club at a tech high school, Minute Man, in Lexington, MA. The school traditionally drew from white suburban and small town populations west of Boston. A year earlier the tech high school in urban Somerville/Cambridge had closed and those students were being bussed out to Minute Man. It wasn't going well, the host teacher told me. It wasn't the student population creating the problem. The faculty, many of whom had been there for many decades, had developed a ritually successful way of communicating that did not resonate for the new students. The teachers groused about how stupid and undisciplined the new students were, and expressed that in their classrooms. The host teacher hoped that I could create a story that would give the faculty a window into these students' lives, strengths, and learning styles.

I interviewed all the students in the club and boiled their experiences down to 4 prototype students who could reflect various issues. I learned a lot as well: how these students had skills that suburban kids couldn't even imagine, like negotiating the subways and developing the smarts to survive in tough neighborhoods, and how they felt about being picked on or ignored in many of their classes. I called the story that emerged "HEAR ME."

To say that this was not well received by the teachers was the understatement of the western world. I now understand that the students' direct words and experiences felt like an attack. I had foolishly neglected one of the great precepts of storytelling:

Listeners must see a mirror of themselves before they can walk through a window into a new experience. I should have interviewed the teachers as well and created a prototype character they could identify with before we went into the world of their students. People's gates of perception slam shut the minute they feel threatened. I did not do my job well and important justice issues were lost because of it.

When creating historic tales, I am passionate about communicating the authentic culture they occurred in. This social, political, theological, economic, and environmental milieu sets the values, behaviors, and expectations of the culture that the event occurred within.

Many years ago I was commissioned by the US Department of the Interior to create a story about the women who manufactured the M-1 rifle, used at D-Day during WWII. The historian at the Springfield Armory, where I was doing this work, warned me: "Now, no revisionist history! Women never expected to be paid what a man earned and we had no racial problems here." That was his version. I promised him to represent only authentic facts and truth.

Not a single retired female armory worker that I interviewed—and none whose interview I read — were accepting of lower pay or the glass ceiling they could not penetrate; they resented being forced out of their jobs when the war ended. Particularly the women of color, who would never again have the opportunity to earn such a level of pay (low, but much better than the other work available to them), voiced bitter disappointment, especially knowing that their returning fathers and husbands would also be relegated to poorer-paying labor jobs. So, I needed to have my characters grouching about the hard winds they faced working in a male environment and telling the truth about our racial history.

During the research, I discovered that a woman of color, Rosa Ward, had sued the Armory in the midst of the war for prejudice in job assignment. All I could find, from culling endless newspapers and Armory documents and even contacting the AME Church of which her husband was a pastor, was that she was doing something utterly revolutionary and was reviled by mostly everyone at the Armory: “The war comes first. She is sucking time and resources away from our mission with this equal rights crap. Do the work, and we’ll deal with this after the war.”

So, I made that the position of my heroine, Eta Bedowski. Through her growing friendship with Janice, a woman of color working in the same shop, she learned about Rosa, and the issues that she had to live through daily, such as never being elevated from her intake job, or being worried that she would not be served at the Waldorf Cafeteria, where all the workers went after shift. Through Janice, Eta came to understand that addressing the endemic racism that makes up the fiber of our culture cannot wait.

She was a very important chapter of this story about women working at the Armory, and hers was woven with all the others into the fabric of a war time tale. It worked and people emerge from this story with a broader sense of authentic American history.

We have the ability and opportunity to raise ideas, reinforce issues of justice, and educate in subtle ways that will enable our listeners to emerge with deeper feeling and new thoughts, and even potential actions they might take. Let’s do it.

SOCIAL JUSTICE – AND STORYTELLING AUDIENCES

By Bill Harley



When you're given a platform, there's a responsibility that comes with the platform. And so I'm always asking myself, what's my responsibility? What am I called to do? I keep thinking about it: what am I called to do?

But the problem—the tension—is that what I'm actually called to do most of the time is entertain. And that's what people come for. And some of us are known for being funny, so people are coming expecting that—which I'm really fine with, but there are a lot of inherent tensions. If you're performing for a general audience, your audience doesn't know what your political bent is, or knows you for a particular other thing. In most circumstances, there's a narrow expectation about what you can do, so that the people don't feel like they were sold a bill of goods and given something else.

I think about all those things. I'm going to approach things differently in Utah than I would in New York City, and I have to balance all that out. I don't think there's one-size-fits-all. I am always thinking of what Brecht said, Our job is to educate and entertain. A lot of the choices I make have to do with the context of where I'm working. When I'm working with a general audience, my question to myself is, where are they? Where are we starting? It depends on the geography, it depends on the age, it depends on the demographics of the group and all these other kinds of things, and I think, to some extent, a mark of a good teller is someone who can look at that and say, this story isn't going to work and this story is.

That is different from, say, somebody hiring you to do a specific thing. But a lot of the situations we go into, we're hired to be a storyteller, we're hired to be Laura Simms, or Bill Harley, or whatever. And so that comes with a certain expectation. Still, even in those situations, there's something in me that's saying, I have to challenge the audience. I want to challenge them to see the world in a new way, and to name something. So I think, in an hour set, most of it is spent doing “stuff.” Because ... well, this is the other tension. My job, also, in that group, for that time we're together, is to build community. That's my job.

And so we're experiencing something together. (I remember hearing Pete Seeger say, Just singing together is a political act.) And being in community with each other in the same room, hearing the same story, has an inherent value, which you could say is political.

But I also feel like I want to challenge my audience to something. I think of doing something and going, oh yeah, man, he's just like me! He's just like me! This is great! He's just like me. He's just like me! And then 40 minutes later, I do something and go, he's just like—

Huh.

I thought he was just like me! Did he just say that? You get that little chance

I'm reminded of hearing Ron Suskind talk (he was a Wall Street columnist who wrote a bunch of well-received books), and he said, My job is every 3 weeks to make somebody on the train have a prick of conscience on their way into work. And I kind of feel like that's what I get to do, and then I also have to clean up at the end of the show. So, I think of the context of where the audience is, who they are, and when can I get them to look at the world in a new way or to challenge them. So that's one kind of context.

And for some people, they're already there. There's another kind of context, which is us speaking to our tribe. If you're doing a benefit for the people in Minneapolis, there's a lot understood. I don't have to go through all that, you know? And in that context, you can be more political, and not worry about it. I should say, I think that kind of work is really important. I remember talking to Si Kahn once, the great political songwriter, and he said, I want to speak to the choir. That's my job, is to speak to the choir, to give them the strength to go on. And in that context, the kind of stories you choose and the decisions you make, will change.

And then there's one other posture: I think of it as a prophetic stance. And by that, I mean that by and large, the prophets in history really did not want to do what they felt called to do. It's like, Not me. I'm not here. I don't really want to do this. Because you know that there's going to be fallout. And I think, especially in an audience where there's a diversity of opinion, or diversity of demographics, when your job is to build a community, sometimes when you speak out against something, what you're doing is dividing. And I don't like to do that—partly because I really want everyone to like me. Many of us are like, I'll do almost anything I can to get somebody to like me, you know?

But I think at certain times, you're in front of that audience, and you're doing it because you can't help yourself. I don't think that it's a good idea to do a lot of it. I don't.

I'm a Quaker, and we have this whole thing about when you should speak in meeting. Basically, the first thing is, well, you shouldn't. You shouldn't. Just shut up and listen. But there's this whole kind of thing you go through before you speak—questions you ask yourself—is this just me? Is this my ego? Am I just getting my yayas out? Is this virtue signaling to show how cool I am? I've had experiences on stage, and they're usually when there are moments like we are in right now, when I know I have to say something. And I can see the audience divide, even as I'm speaking. And I don't like that. But I think that prophetic stance sometimes is what you're called to do.

With all that said, I believe one of the things that's really powerful about story is its metaphor. Judith alluded to this. Some of you know I have this talking blues about “The Emperor's New Clothes” -- and I just keep saying it's just a story, it's just a story. But I know it's directly related to what's going on now. I don't have to name anybody in this story. Sometimes we feel like we need to be very specific, but we don't—if we have a story that contains a strong metaphor. Gamble Rogers said, If your work speaks for itself, don't interrupt. If you've got the right story, then the metaphor will carry. I think, historically, of people in oppressed situations. They told stories that were very guarded, but they all knew what the story was about. I think that it's incumbent upon us to find those stories, and we can make them very distant. And one reason people can hear stories is because they're not about them. The story is a chance for you to hold it out and look at it, and take from it what you want.

So I think being aware of the power of particular metaphors and stories is really important. I tell a version of a story, which I actually first heard from Doug Lipman, that he got from David Holt, called “The Freedom Bird,” and kids love it. It's a very obnoxious story about this guy who shoots a bird and brings it back, and it's still singing, and he chops it up and it's still singing, and he boils it and it's still singing, and he eats it. Actually, in the original Thai version, he eats it, and then he shits it out, but ... I don't do that part. But the bird continues to sing, and at the end, the guy says, I can't kill you, you're the freedom bird.

And, most of the time, it's just this delightful thing, but every once in a while . . . I remember I told it in some public performance right after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It was just a story, it was not me. It was electric, and there was nothing that needed to be said. So, there's a power in having those stories and understanding their metaphors.

The last thing I would say, given what we're going through, is that I'm really interested in moral courage. Physical courage is one thing, but moral courage is quite another. And we're in a situation now where moral courage is required. It's a very rare commodity, for all of us. I don't think there's any one right answer about what story you should tell, or when you should stand up and speak, or how you do it. But I do think we need to make ourselves a bit more vulnerable, and our challenge—to those of us who understand that story has a power—is to make ourselves more vulnerable in what we say. This is saying something that I feel. And as all of us who have been in those situations know, again, I feel it's like speaking in Quaker meeting. It's like, I really don't want to do this. But I know that I have to, and so I think we need to challenge ourselves. On a daily basis.

That's what I got for you.



About the Author

Bill Harley is a storyteller, songwriter, author and playwright best known for his work with children and families. Considered by fans and peers alike to be one of the best storytellers in the country, his work is a celebration of commonality and humanity, delivered through comic narrative songs and confessional spoken pieces. His stories and songs are vibrant – moving with ease from hilarity to poignancy. Harley began writing and performing in 1975 while still a student at Hamilton College. Over forty years, his work has influenced generations of children, parents, performing artists, and educators.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work

The Three Green Ladies

A Folktale from Derbyshire, England

With the permission from MacDonald, Margaret Read (1999) EARTH CARE. New Haven:
Linnet Books.

On a hill in England there once stood three
huge trees.

Those trees were hundreds and hundreds of
years old.

No one knew for certain just how old they
might be.

The farmer owned whose property they stood
thought of them

as being in his care for his life span.

He never spoke of owning the land.

He spoke of taking care of the land.

“This land is my responsibility,” he said.

“During my life I will care for it the best I can.

As my father did before me
and his father before him.

And after I'm gone,
my sons will care for the land.”

Now there was a certain custom in his family.

Every year on Midsummer Eve
the head of the family would climb the hill
with a fistful of

primroses from the garden.

He would place a few flowers at the root of
each huge tree.

The farmer had done this every year
and his father before him
and his father before him.

It was a family tradition.

When this farmer was dying
he spoke to his sons.

“Remember to care well for this land.

It is your responsibility now
as it was mine during my life.

And don't forget to take a bit of primrose to the
Three Green Ladies on Midsummer Eve.”

When the father died, the eldest son
inherited most of the land.

To him went the huge farm and the hill
with the Three Green Ladies.

To the second son went a smaller piece of
land.

But the youngest received only a patch of
rocky soil behind the hill.

As soon as the eldest son inherited land,
he began to brag.

“I OWN all this land.

Look at all that I OWN.

It is MINE to do with as I want.”

He never said a thing about taking care of
the land.

And on Midsummer Eve that son didn't
set one foot on the hill
to take flowers to the Three Green Ladies.

“That old superstition.

Those old traditions should be buried with
my father.”

But the youngest son remembered.

He picked three small bouquets of
primroses and climbing the hill

he set the flowers at the root of each tree.

Then he sat for a while in the shade of
those great trees.

He felt so comfortable sitting there in the
presence of those old living things.

When he came down the hill his eldest
brother was waiting for him.

“What were you doing up on the on my
hill?”

“I was taking primroses for the trees
as our father taught us.”

“Well, those trees belonged to ME.
I don't want you setting foot on my property
again!”

“But I love to sit up there in the shade of those
three great trees.”

“Well, you won't sit there again.
Besides, after tomorrow there won't be three
trees there.
There will only be two.
Because I'm cutting down one for lumber to
build a barn.”

And the next day...
on Midsummer Day itself...
that elder brother climbed the hill with his axe.

And he chopped
and he chopped
and he chopped
at the heart of that tree.

And he chopped
and he chopped
and he chopped
at the heart of that tree.

And he chopped
and he chopped
and he chopped
through the heart of that tree.

And at dusk the tree was ready to fall.
But when the tree fell it screamed like a dying
woman.
A wind came up out of nowhere
and whirled that tree round on its roots...
and it fell...
on top of the elder brother.
And killed him there.

So the servants came and carried off his body.
And they sawed up the tree for lumber
and carried her away.

Now the second son inherited.
All the land became his.
And the two remaining Green Ladies were his, too.
But like his brother he bragged...
“All this is MINE!
All this property...it is MINE now!
I can do with it whatever I want .”
And he never thought a thing about taking care of
the land.

The next year on Midsummer Eve
the youngest son again picked primroses
and climbed the hill to the Two Green Ladies.
He put flowers at their roots,
and sat for a while in their shade,
enjoying the presence of the old living things.

But when he came down from the hill
the second brother was waiting for him.

“What were you doing up on MY hill?”

“I was taking primroses for the Two Green Ladies.
Just as our father always did,
and his father before him,
and his father before him.”

“Well, those Green Ladies belong to ME now.
So stay off my property.”

“But I enjoy sitting in the shade of those two old
trees.”

“Well, there won't be two trees there after
tomorrow.
I'm cutting one of them down for wood to build a
fence.”

And the next day...
on Midsummer's Day itself...
the second brother went up the hill with his axe.

And he chopped
and he chopped
and he chopped
at the heart of that tree.

And he chopped
and he chopped
and he chopped
at the heart of that tree.

And he chopped
and he chopped
and he chopped
through the heart of that tree.

And at dusk the tree was ready to fall.
And when the tree fell it screamed like a dying lady.
And a wind came up out of nowhere
and whirled that tree round on its roots
and it fell...
down on the second brother.
And killed him there.

The servants came and carried his body away.
And they cut up the tree for fence posts
and carried her away, too.

Now the youngest brother inherited all the land.
He looked on it kindly and said,
“Now I will care for you,
as my father did before me
and his father before him.
And my sons after me...
they will care for you, too.”

And so he did.
He worked the land well and it prospered.
And every evening he would climb the hill
and sit for a while in the shade of the One Green Lady.

When he died his sons cared for the land after him.
And their sons after them.
And that One Green Lady is standing there still,
alone in her hilltop in England.

But I fear one day soon
another young man will come to that
hill.

He will take his axe and climb to the
top.

And he will say, “All this is MINE.
I OWN it.

To do with as I want.”

And he will begin to chop...

and chop...

And chop...

at the heart of that last Green Lady.





-THE HALL *of the* BARD-

Chang 'e and Hou Yi

A Chinese Folktale

Long, long time ago Chang 'e and her husband Hou Yi, the great archer, were immortals living in heaven. Chang 'e and Hou Yi were madly in love.

One day, the ten sons of the Jade Emperor transformed themselves into ten suns, and the Earth became really hot. The water in the lakes and rice paddies dried up. The people and the animals were dying. The Jade Emperor ordered his sons to stop scorching the Earth, but his sons ignored him. The Jade Emperor then summoned Hou Yi for help.

"Hou Yi, there are ten suns in the sky. It is too hot, the crops are drying up, and people and animals are dying. Take care of this problem."

Hou Yi was the best archer in all of the heavens. He used his legendary archery skills and shot down nine of the Jade Emperor's sons, leaving one in the sky to be the sun.

Unfortunately, this was not what the Jade Emperor had in mind when he asked for Hou Yi's help. He was upset with Hou Yi.

The Jade Emperor banished both Hou Yi and his wife Chang 'e from heaven to live as mere mortals on the Earth.

The couple tried to adapt to their new situation, but life was hard, especially for Chang 'e. Seeing that his wife was miserable over the loss of her immortality and the fact that she had nothing to do with the demise of the Jade Emperor's sons, Hou Yi decided to make the journey to the ends of the Earth to plead his case before the Queen Mother of the West.

After a long and arduous journey, Hou Yi finally arrived at the court of the Queen Mother and told his story. The Queen Mother took pity on him. She then presented him with a potion of divinity for saving the realm from the scorching suns.

The potion had the power to make anyone who drank it live forever and ascend to heaven. If each of them drank only half of the potion, they would become immortal but would have to reside on Earth. Hou Yi loved his wife Chang 'e very much and couldn't bear the thought of living without her, nor did Chang 'e wish to leave her husband. They did not know what to do and decided just to hold on to the potion of divinity for now.

However, one of Hou Yi's students, Péng Méng, learned of the potion and wanted it for himself. He wanted to become a god and live forever in heaven.

One day, when Hou Yi was out hunting, Peng Meng went to his house and tried to force Chang 'e to give him the magic elixir. Chang 'e did not want Peng Meng to ascend to the heavens and become an immortal. She also knew that she stood no chance of keeping the potion from him. In desperation, she drank the elixir herself, and immediately began to transform.

Hou Yi came home just in time to see Chang 'e begin to float away from the Earth. She flew higher and higher, but she was still banished from heaven.



She decided to make her home on the moon so that she might be closer to her husband.

Meanwhile, Hou Yi was heartbroken. He looked up at the night sky and called out Chang 'e's name. To his amazement, he saw her figure appear on the Moon, looking down at him with love. He decided to prepare some fruits and cakes that he knew she loved, on a table under the moon every night in hopes that Chang 'e would see how much he missed her and return to him. Moved by their true love and devotion, the Queen Mother of the West allowed Chang 'e to reunite with Hou Yi once a year on the night of the full moon of the 8th lunar month. Since then, the 15th day of the 8th lunar month is celebrated as the Mid-Autumn Festival.



-HEALING SPRINGS-

The Magic Spring

A Korean Folktale

Once upon a time in a high mountain village there lived an old couple. Although they were very poor, they cared for one another very deeply. Mostly they were very happy, but sometimes they were sad because they had no children. Every day, the old man would go into the woods to cut firewood to sell in the market.

Once he reached the woods on this particular day, he gathered up tree branches and loaded them onto his wood carrier. He was about to leave when he heard the most beautiful sound of a bird singing.

“Oh, how lovely! I've never heard such a sound before.”

The old man stood still listening to the songbird. Soon the bird's trilling grew fainter. The old man decided that he had to see the bird that made that beautiful song and hurried off in the direction of the trilling.

He soon came upon a strange white bird perched on a branch of an old tree. He had never seen a bird such as this before. He was tired and sat down to rest and listen to the bird.

As soon as he did, the bird flew a little further away and began singing a different song. The old man got up and followed the bird. In this way, the white bird led the man deeper and deeper into the forest.

Before he realized it, morning had become afternoon. “What have I done? Where am I?”

As if it understood what the old man had said, the mysterious white bird flew over to the old man, circled his head three times, and then landed beside a nearby spring.

The old man was very thirsty from his long walk in the forest. He bent down and drank from the spring. “It is as sweet as honey! Oh, I feel so strange.” The old man lay down on a flat rock and was soon fast asleep.



At sunset, when the old man had not returned, his wife began to get worried. When it became fully dark, she could wait no longer. She went to their neighbor's house. "My husband has not returned from the mountain. I am afraid something may have happened to him. Can you help me find him?"

The man next door, unfortunately, was the most selfish, mean man in the village. "It is the middle of the night! It is too late to look for anyone tonight. I am not going anywhere."

The old woman had no choice but to set out on her own to search for her husband.

The old man woke up in the dark. "Why am I sleeping here? I have to go home. My wife will be worried." And he began to make his way out of the woods.

The old woman had not gone far when she saw her husband hurrying towards her. They hugged until they cried and then they walked home arm in arm.

However, when the old woman lit a lamp in their home, she almost fainted. "Who, who, who are you?"

"What do you mean? I am your husband."

"No. You look like the man I married forty years ago."

The old man touched his face. He was no longer an old man. He was young again. "How can this be? Hah! It must be the spring water I drank!"

The husband then told his wife about the strange white bird and the miraculous spring. "It is a wonderful thing, but folks will think it strange that you have such an old wife."

"Nonsense! Come with me to the spring tomorrow and you can become young again, too."

They set out early the next morning and the man led his wife to the spring. She drank a few sips of the spring water and fell into a deep sleep. When she awoke, her husband was sitting by her side. She was a pretty, young woman again. They went back home and lived together happier than they had before.

The mean neighbor noticed the new couple living next door and was shocked to hear their story. He wanted to be young again and live a long life. "Where did you say this spring was?"

As soon as the rooster crowed the next morning, the mean man rushed toward the mountain. When he did not return after two days, the young couple got worried and went looking for him.

When they got to the place where the spring was all they found was a little puddle of water. Then they heard a very loud, high-pitched cry come from behind a nearby rock.

When they looked, they found a baby squirming around in a pile of their neighbor's clothes. Their greedy neighbor drank too much of the spring water and had become a baby.

"What are we going to do with him? I know! Maybe we can raise him as our own child."

"That's a wonderful idea!"

And so the couple took the baby home and raised him as if he were their own child. He was raised with so much love and attention that he grew up to be very kind, considerate, and thoughtful. And the three of them lived happily for the rest of their days.

REMEMBERING Doug Lipman



You may not know me, but I met Doug about 20 years ago, when he came to Utah to teach a workshop. From that time on, Doug and I traded weekly listening sessions on the phone about life, storytelling, the world, and everything. I know Doug deeply and miss him beyond words. I am honored to help us all remember Doug and keep his flame alive in our hearts.

Doug always told me that the difference between zero and one is the biggest difference in the world. I wonder how many of you feel the same as I that Doug was the difference between zero and one?

He taught us how to listen – really listen, without any other agenda besides fully, completely, and delightedly being there for another human, listening to whatever they need. Did you know how to do that before you met Doug? I didn't.

He taught us how to appreciate others and their creative work as a tool. To appreciate the tellers – who they are, what they bring to the conversation, their unique perspectives, and the gifts they have to offer. He taught us how to appreciate the story, the moments which were truly alive, the structure, the content, the message, the beauty of each story, and to appreciate how the story made us feel. He taught us to let the teller know where we connected to their work, what emotions their story brought up for us, and where we saw ourselves in someone else's story.

Did you know how to do this before Doug put such eloquence to the teaching? Did you know how well it could work in developing genuine stories and storytellers?

Doug taught us about being a creative ally – a buddy, a friend, and how to receive a creative ally into our own creative processes. He taught us to show up for another person and let them show up for us; to schedule appointments so that the work we really want to do actually happens – from phone calls to in-person meetings and Zoom. One appointment at a time, two (or more) people actually worked on the things that were most important -- things that would have otherwise been doomed to the “someday when I have time” pile of life.

How many of us, like me, created buddies and communities because Doug inspired us with the importance of not doing this creative work alone?

He taught us how to find the MIT – the Most Important Thing – in our stories and in our lives. How to find the details that supported the MIT, so that we could share more than just a story – instead, sharing a little bit of who we are in each story.

He taught us how to coach and mentor others, by example and in classes. He taught us how to respect where each storyteller is in their creative process; how to accept that our job as a coach is not to make these tellers better, but to help them feel safe enough to become the best version of themselves.

He taught us to check in with ourselves with questions such as “Is what I’m about to say more likely to increase this person’s trust in themselves or in me?” Who does that? Who wants to help someone in a way that they develop trust in themselves instead of the coach? Doug Lipman.

He taught us how to ask questions of the teller to help them think and dig into their story. Questions that invite reflection:

“How did that feel?”

“What matters most to you here?”

“What do you want to try next?”

He taught us to offer suggestions rarely and carefully – as a gift to lay down at the other person’s feet, a gift they can choose to take or leave – instead of presenting a suggestion as an imperative, a miracle fix, or a guaranteed solution.

Doug taught and supported me (and I wonder how many others) in establishing creative communities in my area that put these principles to practice so that I thrived because of it.

He taught many of us (including me) how to “Image Ride.” How to harness the most powerful part of communication – the image that is conveyed from one mind to another as we tell a story. He also taught us how to access those images on demand, develop them into stories and deep meaning, that get conveyed beyond what words alone can do.

I could say so much more of the things he taught and the way he lived and loved, but for this memorial I’ll stop here with one last thing.

Through Doug’s light I saw myself and others better and more clearly.

And just like his iconic logo suggests, he lit my light, and yours, too, and he lit them for a reason. He lit our lights so that we could light others, so that the spark he started could continue burning, and continue helping everyone see more clearly. Never diminished, only burning brighter together, as we share what he gave us. That would be the best honor we could give him – live what he taught, just like he did.

Whose candle wick is waiting to receive your spark?



About the Author

Steffani Raff tells stories on stages, podcasts, in schools, books, and video. Her award-winning work pairs playful humor with emotional honesty. Her stories invite audiences to feel alive with wonder, see the familiar differently, and discover surprising wisdom. Find her work on Wink: Stories for Better Bedtimes and YouTube @storypossibilities.


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-THAT'S AMAZING!-

Behind the scenes of great performers.



Bless Your Heart – Tandem Telling About Life’s Balancing Acts

By Sarah Brady & Hannah Harvey



What inspires a storyteller to tell a particular story—or to create an entire program? And what makes two storytellers not only know they need to create work together, but precisely what that work should be?

Though we didn’t know one another before 2017, we had a lot in common: we were both women from the South who came from academia into the storytelling world; each is the primary caregiver for her children; each married to a husband whose work demands much of him; and each a woman of the same deep spiritual faith, who was juggling quite a lot of personal obligations in the midst of trying to sustain a heavily-interrupted storytelling career.

Seeing all of this in the late spring of 2017, immediately before Sarah moved with her family to England because of her pediatrician husband’s job in the US Air Force, Sheila Arnold (a woman with an uncanny knack for encouraging other storytellers by bringing them together!) orchestrated our meeting. Sheila had faith that, though Hannah would be returning to her working farm in the Appalachian Mountains and Sarah transplanting herself to the British countryside, our lives had enough in common that something good would grow. And grow it did. Once Sarah returned to the US in the middle of 2020, we reconnected.

At that point in our lives, we had many similarities in circumstance as storytellers. Sarah’s nomadic family life as a military spouse was part of her shift from being a college professor to sharing one-person shows in educational settings and eventually to the storytelling world. Hannah had been a college professor and premiered at the National Festival before moving back home to take care of ailing parents, beginning her own brood of kids, and taking up the family farm. For both of us, our ability to commit to our careers and to gigs over the past decade has undulated in rhythm with the needs of our families.

We thought we'd be rehearsal partners, but that quickly grew into work encouragement and accountability partners. Partners who were able to understand and respect the ebb and flow required within our given circumstances, while pushing each other to create the work that was bubbling within us. We encouraged each other to cultivate healthy goals in the midst of tending family and careers through a worldwide pandemic and beyond.

Hannah grew up in East Tennessee watching tandem tellers Barbara Freeman and Connie Regan-Blake tell stories at her own elementary school: "My mother bought three of their records, and back home I would roller skate and listen to their stories," recalls Hannah. "Not only the ones that they told together, but also hearing how the two of them wove story sets together, alternating their solo storytelling styles back-and-forth, especially on the CHILLERS record. The way that they blended and moved between humor and drama was such a powerful balancing act, and that influenced me greatly." Hannah did storytelling in high school forensics competitions and oral history/performance studies work in graduate school.

Meanwhile Sarah, who grew up in Lowcountry South Carolina, hadn't even known as a girl that the storytelling world existed. But she had a deep love of stories: "I was the kid who would finish my schoolwork and sit in the back of the room, consuming books and writing stories that I'd share with my friends. That love grew into a passion for forensics, particularly solo interpretation and duo acting competitions. And when it came time to go to college, I decided to study acting, because I loved the stories of literature and history and wanted to tell these stories." Sarah's graduate studies and her love of research continue to influence the stories she tells.

At a certain point, we realized there was a deeply purposeful story in the struggles we *ourselves* have shared as women over the past several years, as we have balanced family, career, spiritual, and personal struggles.

Our rehearsal process, out of necessity of the different roles we juggle, looks a bit different from what our traditional acting training courses prepared us for (it is a *luxury* that we simply do not have, to be able to spend hours of uninterrupted time in in-person rehearsal). We research, write, and rehearse individually in spurts and increments, in between cooking two to three meals a day. We Zoom call each other regularly to discuss ideas and flesh out stories (often, having to abruptly end sessions early to attend to others' needs). We write articles from our cars while parked outside our kids' schools (hence, we were able to produce the words you read right now...).

We have struggled to say "no" to others within and outside of our families, in order to say "yes" to the time we need to create the work we feel called to put out into the world -- often *apologizing* for not being who everyone else wants or expects us to be.

C'est la vie for many working women who balance all the roles we *want* to (and are expected to) have, in order to both "make a living" *and* give ourselves the full lives we desire.



And this was part of the inspiration for our first tandem show together. Recently debuted online in collaboration with ASST (Artists Standing Strong Together) in April of 2026, and premiered in-person at the International Storytelling Center’s Teller-in-Residence program in August 2024, *Bless Your Heart: An Apology For Everything* focuses on heroes who — through the worlds of myth, fairytale, folktale, and everyday life — have gone on their own journeys of self-discovery, working within their given circumstances, and claiming their own right to power and authority over their own lives.



Some of the stories — such as Sarah’s version of “Fairy Midwife” from England and Hannah’s version of “Vasilisa the Fair” from Slavic culture — were stories we’d told before but wanted to fine-tune. Layering questions of women’s roles and women claiming their own power helped us discover deeper resonance and imagery in the stories. The fairy woman and the human midwife discover that, though they live in different worlds, their experience as women unites them. Baba Yaga and Vasilisa meet one another “eye to eye” as powerful women together in the woods. Vasilisa also has many moments of decision in the story either to set down the light that she has earned, or to wield the fire that has flooded inside of her.

We crafted other stories which have been simmering in our heads, specifically for this show. “Cassandra was a story which has been bubbling for me,” Sarah says, “that I knew I had to tell.” Sarah crafted two versions of the story — one that was the myth alone, for telling at Timpanogos and other festivals. The other version was specific for this show and interweaves personal stories highlighting the universality of women’s often unnoticed experiences in both myth and everyday lives. “Though separated by thousands of years, the feeling of being invisible is one that Cassandra shares with far too many women living today,” Sarah muses.

Similarly, Hannah had been slow roasting a story. Seven years after her mother’s death and approaching the same age as her mother at the time of the events in the story, Hannah crafted “Mama’s Armor.” “It’s about my mother’s love of big makeup in the 80’s, yes,” Hannah says, “but it’s really a metaphor for all of the expectations layered onto women’s bodies, and all of the different kinds of armor that women wear and wield and pass on to one another to help each other survive.” In the story, generations of women teach each other how to see the rules of culture, and how to find multi-layered agency within themselves. “She put down her eyeliner pencil, and she taught me about a different kind of armor. ‘Honey, you go out there and get the highest degree of education you can in the thing you love to do, and that way you never have to be dependent.’”

We are currently working on our next tandem show, *Old Cookbook Wisdom & Recipes for Hard Living*. “Century after century, cooking and meal-sharing have been signs of love, a cultural event, and even sometimes an act of resistance...” The stories dig into when family meals go right and wrong, food abundance and insecurity, and the mental load of mommy meal-prep. The show will premier as part of the ISC’s Teller-in-Residence series in September 2026.

Grateful for the encouraging role we play in each other's lives, we're precariously balancing what sometimes seem to be opposing demands, with one foot in each of the overlapping Venn diagrams of caring for families we adore and continuing in careers we're called to, with all of the written and unwritten, spoken and unspoken expectations and roles which come with each set of responsibilities and womanhood itself.

We hope these stories resonate with audiences — heaven knows, we're all juggling quite a lot in life. Cheers to the people who have lifted us up, and continue to help us balance, as we walk along together.

*To be told in educational and professional settings
with attribution*



About the Author

Sarah Brady is an accomplished actor, storyteller, teaching artist, and writer. She has taught communication and theatre at several universities. Her storytelling spans historical, traditional, literary, and personal genres. She has appeared at the National Storytelling and the Timpanogos Storytelling Festivals. sarahosburnbrady.com, performanceandpen@gmail.com



About the Author

Hannah Harvey is an Appalachian storyteller and scholar-artist. She earned her PhD in Communication Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. She has been featured at the National Storytelling Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe. With Elizabeth Ellis and many others, Hannah helped start the Storytellers' Legacy Project, a community-based oral history project sponsored by the Storytelling Resource Place in Jonesborough, TN (www.ourslp.org). covestory.com, hannah.covestory@gmail.com

-PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

A Riddle For You

Ware airy little creatures,
Each have different forms and
features;
One of us in glass is set,
Another you will find in jet;
A third, less bright, is set in tin,
A fourth a shining box within;
And the fifth, if you pursue,
It will never fly from you.

-SB

Last Issue's Answer: The Letter "e"

LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy & The Spirits of the Beast

Summer is here with its sunshine, heat, picnics, humidity, cookouts, and wildfires. The juxtaposition of words that sound similar but have very different meanings has made my brain go walkabout.

To be absent is to be missing, but to be abstemious is to be self-disciplined. To be ageless is to never age, but to be an agelast is someone who never laughs. A dungeon is dark, underground prison, but a dudgeon is a state of intense anger, which you might experience if you were in a dungeon. To be an invertebrate is to have no backbone, but to be inveterate is to be long established. To be cognizant is to be aware or informed, but a cognoscenti is a group of experts. Effluent is waste liquid released into the environment, but effulgent is to shine brightly.

In each issue we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise “lost” word. We will make up three silly definitions for the word to amuse ourselves and hopefully you, dear reader. Your job is to make up your own definition for the lost word, just for fun. Next month, we will publish the true definition of the “lost” word and provide you with another one. Enjoy!

OBRUMPENT (adj.) 17th century.

1)The portly man stormed down the street, his obrumpent nature caused women and children to turn away, dogs and cats to flee, and even rats to seek shelter.

2)They strolled about the battlements gazing up at the foreboding and obrumpent skies, across at the myriad camp fires of the army encircling their town, at their own meager and untrained defenders, and lit their last cigars.

3)He was his jovial, jocular, and obrumpent self, cavorting and joking with all, and being the life of the party, while weeping bitterly on the inside knowing that the change was upon him and that once complete, they would never speak to him again.

Last Month’s Lost Word:

FLYPE (v.) 17th century. - To fold back, as in to “flype a sock.” We can thank the Scots for this little marvel of a word. 17th century.



For more fun explore:
Carmen Agra Deedy’s LOST WORD SOCIETY
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by Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

Stages

My Life in Stories



Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

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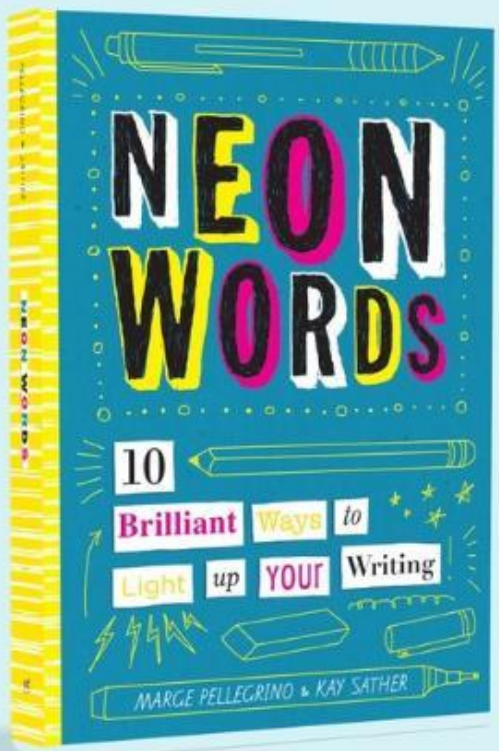
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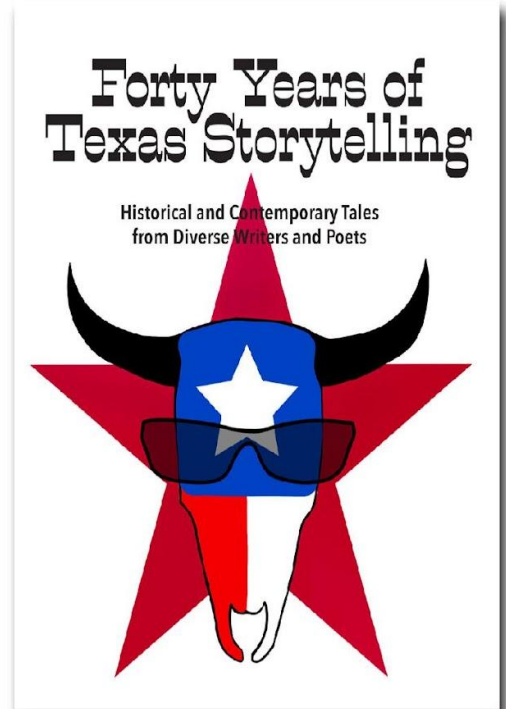
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Ted Parkhurst has been a longtime supporter of the Tejas Storytelling Association. He has provided exhibits, moderated sessions, and given overall support for many years, and not just to Tejas, but storytelling across the nation. Ted and his wife, Linda, the lead graphic designer on this project, have gone an extra mile to see this book through to completion. We appreciate them.

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