

WE'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE...WE REJOICE IN THE RETELLING.



THE REGISTER

JUNE 2019 NEWSLETTER

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

MO-TELL is an organization for all storytellers and story listeners. I hope our members feel like they have a voice in this organization. We really want to hear from you. What new stories have you heard lately? Who told them? We want to let everyone know what is happening around the state. Did you go to a fabulous workshop on storytelling? Tell us about it. I want this to be your organization. What would you like to see in its future? How can you be a part of that? How can I make this organization better? Let's talk. I will listen. Thank you for your membership, your time and your talent.



A THOUGHT FOR YOUR DAY:

"Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here."

— Sue Monk Kidd,
The Secret Life of Bees

FOR YOUR INFORMATION



SAVE THE DATE!

January 24, 25, 26, 2020

River and Prairie Storyweavers will host its **27th Annual Chicken Festival** at the Paola Community Center (905 E. Wea Street, Paola, KS, 66071). The Chicken Festival is a combination of community outreach & storyteller retreat. Attendees are those who love stories, whether you are a storyteller or a story listener, all are welcome. Instead of one or a few featured tellers, YOU are the featured storyteller when you tell your story.

As part of the community outreach, we will tell stories in the local schools, libraries, and senior centers on Friday, January 24, and present a community storytelling concert on Saturday, January 25. Those interested in volunteering their talents to tell in the community should contact Gary Kuntz as 816-896-8611.

Friday evening, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning storyteller will share their favorite stories and music. Yes, there is a time slot for chicken stories. Keep checking www.riverandprairiestoryweavers.org for updates on The Chicken Festival.

The Nitty Gritty: Chicken Festival registration is \$30 for RAPS members or \$60 for non-RAPS members. RAPS annual member is \$25, \$35 for a family. Contact the Paola Inn and Suites (1600 E. Hedges Ln. Ct., Paola, KS, 66071) At (913) 294-3700 by 12/24/19 for the fabulous RAPS room discount rate of \$70 (plus taxes). Don't delay! Don't call too late for reservations to the Chicken Festival only to find yourself completely plucked.





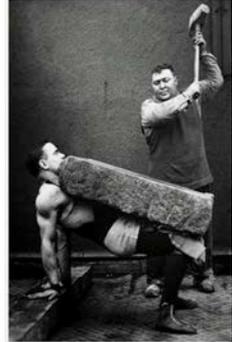
The FIFTH ANNUAL Missouri State Liar's Contest



The 2019 Missouri State Liar's Contest, sponsored by MO-Tell (Missouri Storytelling) will take place at the Daniel Boone Regional Library in Columbia, Missouri, on July 13th, 2019. Regional judges of honor and renown (at least in the hearts of their mothers) will rank worthy contestants and you in two arenas on that day: **Oral Storytelling** (up to a ten minute story) and **Written Storytelling** (up to 3,000 words).



Tellers from far & wide, from all corners of Missouri (and then some), will clash in a cloud of contrivances to fight in a field of fabrications, wielding whoppers! Compete for the kind of notoriety that flirts with the notorious! Rules and Applications are attached hereafter!



**** NOTE ** Submission deadline is June 1, 2019.**
* Confirmed to NOT enter this year: Ralph Nader, Whoopi Goldberg, Jack Soo, George Burns, Henry Kissinger, Ken Wolfe, & Phyllis Diller. It's the perfect year to enter! Whether or not you intend to personally compete in either or both of the contests, please be sure to attend on July 13th, 2019!



It's one of the most creative storytelling events in our fair state and, most importantly of all, we need witnesses.

**CAN YOU CREATE A STORY TO EXPLAIN ANYTHING IN THE MARGINS OF THIS LETTER?
THEN YOU'VE GOT THE BLARNEY AND WE EXPECT YOU TO ENTER THE MSLC!**

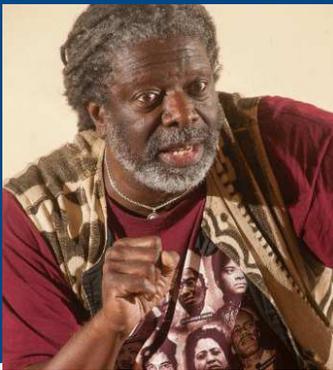




SAVE THE DATE!

November 13-16, 2019

THIS YEAR'S FEATURED TELLERS



Michael D. McCarty



Laura Packer



Dovie Thomason



Andy Offutt Irwin



Musical Storytelling
Performance by
Mike and Nancee Micham

MCC

816.604.3011

KCSTORYTELLING.MCCKC.EDU

Metropolitan
Community College



MAPLE WOODS



2nd Annual
Story Tree®

At the American Legion Hall

Saturday, Aug. 17, 2019

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Free Admission for this drop in Event

For the 2nd Year Storytellers of the Ozarks will be presenting a wide range of stories for your listening pleasure.

Brand new this year our first ever

Story Slam

Don't miss this new event!!

American Legion Hall located at 115 S. Spring Park Blvd. Mt. Vernon, MO, (leave I-44 at exit 49, drive west for 2 miles. At "T" turn left and drive 1 mile. American Legion is on right side of road next to Meek's Lumber.)

For information call 417-413-6720 or e-mail: rcrotser48@gmail.com

Please thank these friends of Storytelling for their support

American Legion Post #137

MO-TELL'S MEMBER PROFILE

GREAT PEOPLE COMPOSE THIS GREAT ORGANIZATION!
EACH MONTH'S MO-TELL REGISTER FEATURES ANOTHER TO THE MEMBERS.

CAROL WATKINS



Tell us a little bit about you.

I was born in Kansas City, MO and grew up in Raytown, MO. The elementary school I attended was a two-room brick structure built in the 1920s. The first and second grade students shared one room and the third, fourth, and fifth grade occupied the other room. I attended Raytown High School and Southwest Missouri State College (now Missouri State University) where I earned a BS in elementary education in 1966. Our family of four included my mother, my father, my older brother and me. I taught for twenty-two years. I have been published in Missouri Life, Turtle, Humpty Dumpty, and Instructor Magazine. I was an actress in numerous community and church theater productions. I have six children and seven grandchildren.

What is your interest in storytelling? How did it begin?

I grew up with my mother reading me and my brother stories in the "story hour chair." She would read the classics to us. Grimm and Anderson fairy tales were my favorite books to read. Every Saturday morning, I would listen to the radio show, "Let's Pretend," which dramatized fairy tales. As a teacher, I would read and dramatize stories to my class using different voices as a means of instilling a love of reading.

What tellers have been influential in your life?

Papa and Jackie Wright, Bobby and Sherry Norfolk, Lynn Rubright, Sharon Thompson, Donna Washington, Linda Gorham, Mary Jo Huff, Annette Harrison

What is a favorite story?

I have many favorite stories, such as "The Ghost on Saturday Night" by Sid Fleischman; My favorite movie is the A&E's 1995 version of "Pride and Prejudice"; I have many favorite songs, such as "It's a Grand Night for Singing" from the musical "State Fair"

Favorite vacation?

My favorite vacation was a trip to California to visit my Uncle Bud and Aunt Versa. My grandmother, Minnie Pearl Dillard Swope Ream, whom we affectionately called "Ma," was afraid of flying, so we all crowded into our air-conditioned Dodge Rambler station wagon. My brother and I sat in the back with Ma. All the way to California, Ma talked about the buff wrestlers she watched on late-night television. To her delight, Uncle Bud had purchased tickets to see a wrestling match. At the arena, my straight-laced, demure grandmother jumped out of her seat as Wild Red Berry, her favorite wrestler, entered the ring and tossed Wild Red candy to the crowd. Ma yelled, "Kill him, Wild Red! Kill him!" I was so -o-o embarrassed, shocked, and a little bit amused.

Why I became a member of MO-TELL:

MO-TELL is a statewide organization that promotes storytelling. To improve I believe that MO-TELL should strive to reach the younger generation through classic fairy tales, folktales, and fables that everyone should know.

AMICI AD ASTRA

OUR FRIENDS,
AWAY TO THE HEAVENS

BECKY WALSTROM



Rebecca Sue (Hull) Walstrom , devoted wife, cherished sister, fun-loving aunt and treasured friend, left the troubles of this world behind on May 13, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri, at the age of seventy-one years. Becky, as she was known to family and friends was born on April 6, 1948, in Eldon, Missouri, to Joseph Emil and Anna Lou Etter Hull.

As a young girl, Becky made a profession of faith in Christ. She was a Charter member of Southern Heights Christian Church in Lebanon. Becky spent her childhood in Lebanon, where she attended school. In 1965, she was Laclede County Fair Queen and later participated in the Miss Missouri Pageant. Becky graduated from Lebanon High School with the class of 1966. The friends she made were countless. Through the years, she kept in contact with many of them.

On September 3, 1967, Becky was united in marriage with the love of her life and eternal best friend Charles Edgar Walstrom. Becky and Charlie spent the next fifty-one years sharing laughter and multiple memories. They loved each other completely.

In 1974, Becky began working at Landau Boat Company. She was the Credit Manager and Purchasing Agent. Through her next four years of employment with Landau, she analyzed financial statements, ordered supplies and assisted with advertising.

In 1980, Becky became an Educational Research Assistant for University of Missouri-Rolla. She assisted with research studies, which were concerned with the environmental effects of students obtaining Federal or State funded grants. She conducted various studies with the students during her time at UMR, including social anxiety testing and Aging. Becky attended Drury College, where in 1981, she obtained her Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration and Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology. She was on the Dean's List and PsiChi Honor Society in Psychology. Also, that same year, Becky was nominated for Outstanding Young Women of America for professional achievement and community service.

Beginning in 1982, Becky began her career with University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL.) Through the years she has held various titles. She excelled at all of them. Becky was Senior Buyer for UMSL from 1982-1990. Beginning in 1990, she became the Senior Continuing Education Coordinator. Becky was also the Campus Coordinator of the Elderhostel Program and most recently, her passion was becoming the Executive Director of St. Louis Storytelling Festival. Preparation for the festival included Becky contracting with featured storytellers, establishing new festival locations, and negotiating hotel and food contracts, among many other things. The festival reached record levels of attendance under Becky's direction, 20,000 men, women, and mostly children from all over the world participate, once a year in May. Becky was driven and goal oriented. She loved every minute of it. She was excited about life and thoroughly enjoyed meeting new people and hearing their life story. Becky also attended University of Missouri-St. Louis and obtained a Masters Degree in Secondary Education with an emphasis in Adult Education in 1998.

Although Becky was career driven, she also enjoyed moments of free time. She enjoyed tending to her garden, spending time with Charlie at the Lake of the Ozarks, and recently, she started playing golf. However, moments shared with her family are what she treasured most.

Becky is survived by her husband Charlie; one brother, Stephen Hull and his wife Cheryl of Lebanon, MO; two nephews, Matt Hull of Springfield, MO and Joe Hull and his wife Sarah of Chillicothe, MO; other relatives, many friends and dear co-workers.

She was welcomed into Heaven by her parents.

Text from Becky's funeral Literature.

SANDI SYLVER



Sandi Sylver was reunited with her sweet Mother and loving dog Apache (Patches) on April 1st 2019. She had suffered a difficult illness over the last year. She was born to Sheldon and Lillian Sylver and spent her first 13 years in Mount Vernon Her father had an opportunity to relocate to NMB Florida where she graduated Miami Norland Senior High School. Sandi had a sense of adventure and an 'I can try anything once' attitude.. She was excited to move to Greenwich Village. She was for sure a beatnik and early hippie. She both worked and performed in that scene as a guitar player, singer and occasional waitress. She loved her time at the Gas Light. After her time in NYC she traveled around Europe. That musical adventure brought her to live in both San Francisco and later to Ojai California. She made long lasting friends wherever she went.

Her next adventure brought her to Atlanta. There she opened a franchise for Roly Poly Sandwich Shops and an Electrologist office. She did well in both adventures for quite a few years. Sandi always loved to entertain and perform. She felt something was missing. Always staring adventure in the eye, she moved to North Aroura Il. It was there she discovered a talent for ventriloquism after reading a book on it at her local library. She worked very hard to hone her craft, specializing in entertaining children to read, performing in libraries all over the country. Her aides on this journey were all her puppets and their varied personalities.

Getting back to Florida and the weather was always on her mind. She found a great opportunity to move to Largo, Florida and buy a home. While performing locally, she still traveled back to the libraries and people that were so kind to her along her journey. It was over this last year of health challenges that she started to slow down...eventually retiring in March. One of her last wishes regarding her puppet family, was to donate them to a school that teaches the craft she loved so much. Sandi is survived by countless friends nationwide; her sister Barbara Rosenthal and brother Max Sylver. She was an Aunt and cousin to many.

Text from Sandi's obituary.

MARY KAY MENEES



Mary Kay Menees passed away peacefully on April 26, 2019. Mary Kay Hardesty was born July 18, 1921, to T.O. Hardesty, M.D. and Katherine (Killam) Hardesty, in Jacksonville, Illinois, where she later graduated from McMurry College. After college, she married Charles Menees of Virginia, Illinois in 1943, and the couple moved to St. Louis. They lived on Art Hill Place, adjacent to the St. Louis Zoo, and then had homes in University City and Kirkwood. Mary Kay had three children, Nancy Katherine, Charles Hardy, and Marcia Anne, born between 1945 and 1955.

Around 1960, Mary Kay returned to Webster College to become a teacher. She was a Faculty member of Central then Conway Elementary Schools in Ladue from 1962 until retirement in 1984. She was a third-grade teacher and loved to teach children to read! During child-rearing years, Charlie Menees worked at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch as a feature writer, columnist and music critic, and then for the McDonnell Douglas Air Scoop as editor of this newspaper. In retirement, Cactus Charlie started his beloved jazz programs on Saturday nights on KWMU and then KMOX radio with his last show entitled: Jazz Under the Arch. His car license plate was Dr. Jazz while Mary Kay's car plate became Saint Jazz. Mary Kay accompanied her husband most Saturday nights and sat by his side during broadcasts.

In retirement, Mary Kay became a community volunteer at First Presbyterian Church of Kirkwood, a storyteller with St. Louis Gateway Storytellers, and a tutor at Reading is Fundamental (RIF) for 36 years. She was also active at the Kirkwood Library, Toastmasters, and participated in several book clubs and bridge groups. Mary Kay is survived by her three children, Nancy Menees Hardesty (John Parker), Hardy Menees (Kathy Menees), Marcia Menees Kessel (Brian Kessel). She is also survived by her grandchildren, Bob Menees (Susanna Menees), Annie Menees (Hon. Joseph L. Goff, Jr.), Evan Hardesty Parker (Cailin Parker), Bonnie Kessel Gregg (Jack Gregg), and Sarah Kessel. Additionally, her great-grandchildren are Sage and Alice Menees, Gracie Goff, and Emerson and Ellis Parker. Mary Kay's family would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the staff at Evelyn's House and St. Luke's Hospital for the compassionate care they provided.

Text from Mary Kay's obituary.

ALWAYS REMEMBER, NEVER FORGET

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, not how it compares with other expression. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open. No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is on a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others.

- Martha Graham

2019 ORACLE AWARD RECIPIENTS

REGIONAL AWARDS

Regional SERVICE & LEADERSHIP AWARDS are presented to individuals that made a significant contribution to their local or regional storytelling community and/or have used storytelling to make a significant contribution to their larger community. We have six such recipients:

- Jo Radner presents & accepts the Regional Service & Leadership Award - North East Region for HOPE LEWIS
- Richard Rousseau presents the Regional Service & Leadership Award - North Central Region to DOROTHY CLEVELAND
- Carrier Sue Ayvar will present the Regional Service & Leadership Award - Southeast Region to ROBIN SCHMALTZ
- **Jackie or Fran** presents the Regional Service & Leadership Award - SouthCentral Region to PERRIN STIFEL
- BZ SMITH presents the 1st Regional Service & Leadership Award - Pacific Region to BILL ROBERTSON
Accepting for him is Dominik Restivo
- Marilyn MacPhee presents & accepts 2nd Regional Service & Ldrshp Awd - Pacific Regn to REBECCA HOM

The REGIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD recognizes creativity, professional integrity, & artistic contributions to regional storytelling culture.

Nancy Donoval, presents the REGIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD e (North Central Region) to Richard Rousseau

NATIONAL AWARDS

INTERNATIONAL STORYBRIDGE AWARD- we have TWO – It recognizes the exemplary work, dedication and spirit of individuals that promote storytelling in their own country or who build bridges between countries through storytelling.

- Marian Ferrante & Sara Armstrong Present Oracle Bridge Award to Catherine Fairlee
- Joyce Slater Present the Oracle Bridge Award to Priscilla Howe
- TALKING LEAVES AWARD for outstanding contributions to the literary body of storytelling as authors, editors or collectors. Bob Kanegis presents the Talking Leaves Award to Vaunda Nelson
- The CIRCLE of EXCELLENCE AWARD is given to artists recognized nationally as master storytellers. We add two to this circle this year:
 - Susan O'Halloran presents the Circle of Excellence Award to Nancy Donoval
 - Someone presents the Circle of Excellence Award to Diane Edgecomb

The LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD is given to individuals who have dedicated their lives to storytelling and service to the NSN and the largest storytelling community.

Jen Whitman presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to her mother, Margaret Read MacDonald.

RIVER AND PRAIRIE STORYWEAVERS

June 2019 Calendar

Thursday June 6, 2019, 7:00 pm - RAPS Main Meeting

Theme for Stories: Bring your ghost stories you have been working on to share and if wanted, get feedback on your stories.

Trailside Center

99th & Holmes Rd.

Kansas City, MO 64131

Saturday June 8, 2019, 2:00 pm - RAPS North Meeting

Theme for Stories: Brides

Woodneath Library Center / Storytime Barn

8900 NE Flintlock Road

Kansas City, MO 64157

Saturday June 22, 2019, 10:00 am - RAPS John Knox Meeting

John Knox Village, Missouri Room (Inside Lakeside Grille)

600 NW Shamrock Ave.

Lee's Summit, MO 64081

STORYTELLERS OF THE OZARKS

June 5, Wed., 10:00 a.m., Tell at Birchpointe Senior Center, Springfield, MO

June 9, Sunday, 2:00 p.m., Swap at Lolita's house, call Lolita or 417-848-5859

June 12 Wed., 10:00 a.m., Crossway Church, Preschoolers, Bible theme

June 20, 2:00 p.m., Tell at Montclair Assisted Living, Springfield, MO, Religious theme.

RIVERWINDS STORYTELLERS

June 10th at 6:30pm. Centralia Library.

This is not an event for all the RWers. Just two storytellers will perform - Mary Lu Bretch and Marilyn Kinsella. The stories will reflect the I-READ Summer Reading theme "Showtime at the Library." This is a family event, but the stories are geared for the children with some audience participation.

GATEWAY STORYTELLERS

Gateway has no activities planned for June.
We're in process of planning a tribute for Becky Walstrom for our July meeting.

MAGNET
HERE

FOR YOUR FRIDGE

MAGNET
HERE

STORIES, GATHERINGS, AND STORY GATHERINGS
AROUND OUR FAIR STATE.

RAPS

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MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE WOODNEATH...

CLASSES FOR STORYTELLING CERTIFICATION!

JUNE 2019 CALENDAR

Story Swap!

Thu, Jun 20 2019 6:30pm - 8:30pm [Woodneath Storytime Barn](#) Story Center
Event Registration Required

An open-mic storytelling event that's open to anyone! Put your name in the hat for a chance to share a seven-minute story or just come to enjoy the show.

EVENT DETAILS REGISTER NOW

Story Swap!

Thu, Jul 18 2019 6:30pm - 8:30pm [Woodneath Storytime Barn](#) Story Center
Event Registration Required

An open-mic storytelling event that's open to anyone! Put your name in the hat for a chance to share a seven-minute story or just come to enjoy the show.

EVENT DETAILS REGISTER NOW

Telling for Tellers

Tue, Jun 4 2019 6:30pm - 8:30pm [Woodneath Storytime Barn](#) Story Center
Event Registration Required

You have a great story to tell, and the Library wants to help you tell it! Learn tips and tricks for brainstorming story ideas and discover resources in your community to help you grow your craft.

EVENT DETAILS REGISTER NOW

Copyright Basics

Wed, Jul 24 2019 6:30pm - 8:30pm [Woodneath Computer Lab](#) Story Center
Event Registration Required

Learn the basics of copyright law, what rights copyright holders have, the exceptions to those rights, and learn the proper application of fair use.

EVENT DETAILS REGISTER NOW



MO STATE PARK TELLING SCHEDULE

May 5 - Big Oak Tree State Park - Larry Brown

May 11 - Hawn State Park - Marilyn & Larry Kinsella

May 18 - Hunter Dawson State Park - Carole Shelton

May 26 - Washington State Park - Marilyn & Larry Kinsella

July 6 - Echo Bluff State Park - Larry Brown

MISSOURI STATE PARKS LOVE US!

(WE HAVE PROOF!)

Carole Shelton braves the crowds (and some seriously harsh backlighting) to perform at Hunter Dawson State Park!





Break a Leg!

INFORMAL REVIEWS OF EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCES

Last summer and again in November, I attended a program presented by EznDil (Mike and Nancee Micham) titled *The Red Clay Country and White Cloverine Salve*. Nancee portrayed her grandmother, wearing a variety of hats to depict different stages in her relative's life. Together Mike and Nancee used story and song to add information about living in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years. In my head, I can still hear Mike sing, *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?* Not only did the program entertain, it deepened my understanding of what life was like for those who struggled, persisted, and survived in a hostile environment, I laughed, reflected on my own life, and held back tears at times. As many of you know, Mike can be a funny, slapstick character; however, this presentation exhibited his and Nancee's ability to perform a meaningful, interpretive piece which held the attention of everyone in the room for nearly an hour.

- Nancy Lewis-Shelton

WE WANT YOUR THOUGHTS:

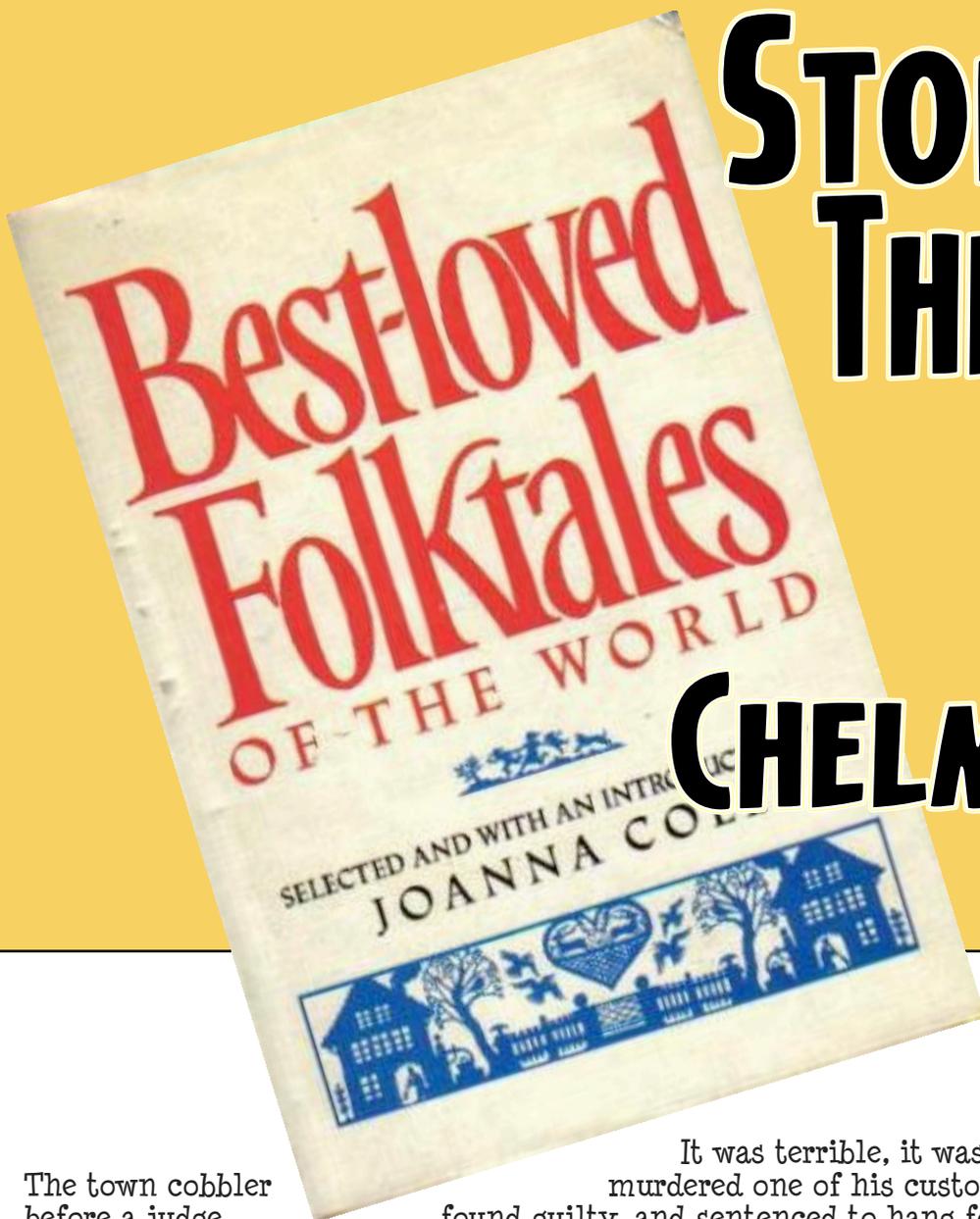
As she was integral to and beloved by MO-TELL, if you have any tribute you'd like to bring in regard to Becky Walstrom and her effect on your life, the St. Louis Storytelling Festival, or storytelling as an art or culture, please do express them to Joyce Slater or send directly to motellnews@gmail.com with "Becky Thoughts" in the subject line. We'll include your words of kindness in an upcoming issue of this newsletter.

On another note, if you'd like to give a financial tribute, we'd be glad to accept your monetary donations to benefit MO-TELL or the St. Louis Storytelling Festival (to whom we'll deliver your donation). Your donation can be listed, as well, if you choose, by name or anonymously.

Thank you.

STORY OF THE MONTH

CHELM JUSTICE



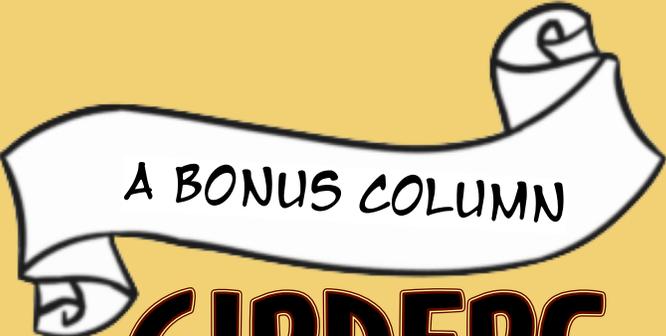
The town cobbler
before a judge,
day. Everyone agreed that the crime warranted a hanging and that justice would be done.

It was terrible, it was horrible, it was a scandal.
murdered one of his customers, was arrested, tried
found guilty, and sentenced to hang for his crime, all on the same

That is until a man arose and cried out before the whole court, "Your Honor, Your Honor please. You have sentenced to death by hanging the town cobbler! He's the only cobbler the town has. If you hang him who will mend our shoes, we'll have to go barefoot!" Then all the people of Chelm cried in one voice, "Who, who will mend our shoes?"

The judge nodded in agreement and considered his verdict. "Good people of Chelm, what you say is true. Since we only have one cobbler it would be a great wrong against our community to hang him. But this was a terrible crime and I have decreed it must be punished by hanging," After a pause the judge said "I have the answer, since there are two roofers in the town let one of them be hanged instead".

Adapted from Best-Loved Folktales Of The World, Selected by Joanna Cole.



A BONUS COLUMN

BY ELIZABETH ELLIS

GIRDERS AND RIVETS: SOME THOUGHTS ON BRIDGE BUILDING

"Nothing happens unless first we dream."

---Carl Sandburg

Things have been hot lately. This time I'm not talking about Texas weather. We are living in a divided and divisive time. Few times in history has our country been this polarized since the Civil War.

Storytelling is an artform. That means all of us who tell are artists, whether we realize it or not. This is a time for us to be thinking about the role of the artist in the community. Certainly the storyteller has many roles. (To entertain, to inspire, to educate, to name only a few. I hope each of us will spend time thinking seriously about our roles.) I believe one of the primary roles of the storyteller is to bring the community together.

Actually, we have talked a lot about this in the past. We often speak about how storytelling builds bridges between people. It does not seem to me, though, that we have thought very deeply about what building bridges really means.

"With stories, you can build walls to separate people or build bridges to unite them! Do the second thing in the name of ethics and honor, for the glory of love and goodness"

---Mehmet Murat Ildan

During the past few years we have watched as stories were used in many different ways. Often they were used to divide us rather than to bring us together. Many of them became tools for separating people into "us" and "the enemy". The problem is we live in the same country, in the same communities. We are all in this together now. There is no place for thinking of fellow community members as "the enemy", even if their story is widely different from our own.

"Wedge issues" do what wedges have always done: split things apart. Now is the time to search for a common narrative. And once found, to share it.

" A bridge has no allegiance to either side."

---Les Coleman

For a bridge to stand, it must have a footing. To create that footing perhaps what is needed now is listening. Compassionate listening to the stories of those different from ourselves can go a long way toward building a foundation of understanding. We may never agree. That is okay. Perhaps that isn't the point. Instead, understanding can lead us to respect. That is a footing worth building on.

To accomplish building bridges it may be necessary for many of us to "mellow the rawness of our personal opinions" (--A.E. Housman) in search of that which speaks to our common humanity.

Not many people love a good soapbox more than I do. But I recognize

"You can't build a bridge out of soapboxes."

---Elizabeth Ellis

Preaching doesn't work. No matter how sure we are that we have "the truth", there are lots of insightful old tales to remind us that each of us has only a limited view of it. The Hindu tell the story of the blind men and the elephant. The one feeling the leg says an elephant is like a tree. The one with the tail is equally convinced that an elephant is like a rope. The man touching the ear is certain an elephant is like a large leaf. The one at the trunk believes an elephant to be a snake. Each is convinced that he alone knows the truth.

The Roman author Plutarch gives us a version of an ancient Egyptian myth where Osiris (the Truth) is dismembered by Typhon (Set) and his parts are scattered to the four winds. Each of us must search for any piece of Osiris and if we find one, cherish it but always continue the search for the other missing pieces. There is much wisdom in these old tales.

There are lots of different kinds of bridges. The ones I am most familiar with are made of girders. I have spent some time lately thinking about what girders I will be using for my own bridge building. I am sure each of us will make different choices, but I will share some of mine with you.

I will search my repertoire for tales that divide us and drop them.

I will remember that none of us have all the Truth.

I will search for stories that emphasize our common humanity.

I will learn tales that celebrate our differences rather than condemn them.

I will shape and share stories of people I might previously thought of as "the enemy".

I have heard it said many times that if you want to learn something, teach it. It seems to me that we could easily substitute the word "tell" for the word "teach".

I look forward to hearing what girders you will choose for your own work.

In the Jewish tradition there is the concept of Tikkun Olam. As I understand it, it means that our function is to mend the tear in the fabric of the Universe. To me there could be no better description of the power of story than that. No matter how many girders we have, they must be held together by something. Screws and rivets are the usual choices. Our choices will be individual stories we choose to tell. Like screws and rivets, stories can be divided into two types: those that give light, and those that give heat. Those that give light are probably going to be more readily accepted by our listeners. However, there are those tales that, like rivets, require heat. They may be harder to tell, but, like rivets, they are likely to make a stronger and more lasting connection.

"That which would give light must endure burning."

---Victor Frankel

That may be my favorite quote, ever. It is written on a piece of paper that is taped up over my desk so that I can look at it every day. It rests beside another that says, "Don't give them what they want. Give them something better." I have taken them down and rewritten them on new paper in a different color of ink. I did so because I wanted to make sure that I do not take them for granted, that I continue to think about what they mean each and every day.

There is much work to do. Our authentic voices are needed now more than ever. Take a little time to think about bridge building. I wish you Joy in the work.

"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now. Love mercy now. Walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it."

---Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot 2:21 the Talmud



Well said, Elizabeth. Thank you.

PUT A CORK IN IT, PAL.

THE STORYTELLER'S ON.

OR, PROVE YOU SUPPORT
STORYTELLING IN MISSOURI.

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RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.
DONATE TOWARD THE CAUSE.
VOLUNTEER YOUR SERVICES.

DO ALL THAT, AND WE'LL TALK.

MAYBE.

MEANWHILE, DURING THE SHOW...



WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Missouri Storytelling, Inc (MO-TELL) is an organization of storytellers and other interested person dedicated to spreading the joy and art of storytelling throughout Missouri.

MISSION STATEMENT

We envision that every Missourian will hear and share stories and keep the oral tradition alive.

VISION STATEMENT

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