

The Storyline

Magazine of The New Zealand Guild of Storytellers Nga Kaikorero Purakau O Aotearoa



In the language of the African Storyteller newly acquainted with English, when a man's heart lay down, he was at peace. May your heart lay down as this year folds away, with sweet song and much palaver.

DECEMBER 2014



Editorial

Greetings!

What is it like to be a storyteller?
That is the question I have been asked.

I looked into my heart and asked myself, "When did I become a storyteller?
What was different before?"

Maybe the answer to these questions would supply my answer.

But I could not find the moment when I suddenly became a storyteller.

It seems that my being a teller of tales began when I began and so I have to say, that for me, to be a storyteller is to live a life like mine.

It is to be a weaver of dreams, a believer in stories. It is to make oneself the repository of eternal truths and to seek, treasure and preserve the essence of the spirit of the peoples.

It is to open one's heart and imagination to the ways of the myriad cultures and racial groups that have inhabited this tiny planet.

It is to become one with the earth and the universe, trying to absorb its secrets.

It is to have a sharing spirit because stories only survive when they are given away.

It is to be one person talking to another.

Having said all that, in poetic style, I must state clearly and firmly that I am not a scholarly storyteller.

I have made no scholarly studies of the art or of story and its sources and styles.

I deeply admire those who have given their lives to such studies and provided the literature which establishes the art of storytelling as worthy of in-depth study. But people are different, and our differences enrich us, and so it is with storytellers. They come in many styles and it is this very individuality that is essential to the development of the art.

Not one teller is like another except in that each



one creates a space for the listeners in which images are formed and truths are discovered. Laughter, tears, anger and compassion are all experienced.

People are empowered.

For me, my storytelling began in my childhood, in my family, where stories were an integral part of life. However, it was when I became a children's librarian that I began to share story in a more formal way.

I found that it was the best way to encourage children to dip into books; it was the best way to create a happy environment where the children felt a sense of belonging and acceptance; it was the easiest way to ensure that we had minimal problems with behaviour (children who sit at your feet in the magic bond of shared story tend to want to keep that magic alive and relationships of warmth develop); it was the most powerful way to do my part in promoting literacy, for storytelling is at the root of the teaching of reading. Through all these years of my storytelling I have come to understand that without story humanity cannot survive and live in peace.

We must have story.

It is through our stories that we share our values, our attitudes, our principles. We do this, even when we are unaware, by the very choice of the stories we tell and the manner in which we tell them.

I once had a gentleman walk up to me after a storytelling programme for adults and state, very firmly, "You are a feminist." When I asked him why

he had made that decision he went on to say that all the stories I had told had females in positive roles even if they were not the dominant characters. When I looked at the repertoire of my stories later I did indeed realise that this was so and that even those without women at all tend to be empowering stories rather than conquering ones.

My belief in the oneness of people, in community, in the need to offer each other support and love is reflected in the tales I choose to tell.

This is not to say that I choose my stories for their values but that the stories which speak to my spirit choose me.

Sometimes, it is the story that reveals to me a truth I need to find and add to my store.

That brings me to my next point.

That being a storyteller means you are in constant touch with truths. Children often ask me, after a story, whether it is true and I always reply that of course it is, as I do not tell lies.

But we go on to explore what that means.

I help them to see that we often misname what is merely information and call it truth.

What we find in non-fiction books, newspapers, TV and so on is not true.

It is merely information for our consideration and if we wish to grow in wisdom we must constantly and carefully sift and evaluate all this mass of information with which we are bombarded.

But it is in the stories of the peoples that we find the truths we need if we are to not only to survive in this world but realise our full potential.

And it is in our own story that we find our own identity.

This has been so from the beginning of time.

2,300 years ago Oedipus said, in Oedipus Rex: "I must find out who I am and where I came from."

Some years ago Alex Haley, a member of the modern and mainly myth-less society of this century, set out to find his own myth and we have, as a result, his powerful book, Roots.

I tell the children and the adults with whom I share story that the words of the story may not be factual but they are like a basket.

They are woven together in wondrous patterns and when you choose to look inside the basket of

these woven words you may find, to your surprise and wonder, truths.

Your own personal, unique truths.

For that is the wonder of story.

Every listener in the audience hears a different story. Every listener's experience is theirs alone. The story whispers secrets into the heart and even I, the teller, do not know what secret my listener will be given.

So, what is it like to be a storyteller?

I could talk about how I practise my art.

I could talk about the sources of my stories.

I could discuss the frustrations that come when people fail to recognise the power of storytelling in the lives of adults as well as children.

I could tell about the pain of trying to live as a storyteller in modern New Zealand which does not see this art as commercially valuable.

Just imagine, despite the fundamental value of the oral tradition to the development of the human mind, this art is not taught in our colleges of education and it is not on the curriculum in our schools.

Despite the healing it offers to the family, to society, it is not offered widely by our health system.

I could discuss how you could become more confident as a storyteller. But I have taken up enough space, I imagine.

Therefore I will tell you my secret.

Why am I a storyteller searching for validity in a media-driven, technological society that sees the machine as all-powerful?

It is because it makes me one with creation and the creator.

My stories, my gifts, are planted in the hearts of my listeners whether they be old or young; they take root in the spirit and they grow and feed the life of each one; my listeners change and grow and I am part of their new life.

What could be more wonderful?

To be a storyteller, for me, is to be like the Mother.

Liz Miller, Editor

lizm@xtra.co.nz

Do any of you receive emails about storytelling and wonder how valid they are and from where they spring?

I have been receiving some which confuse me as they seem to come from different addresses while obviously from the same group in Africa.

As there are some very interesting topics and ideas I will put the web address here in case you wish to look. Mostly they seem to bear the name of Graham Williams – Business Storyteller.

www.haloandnoose.com

It does fascinate me to read the statement beside their name when you open the website –
“A halo only has to fall inches to be a noose.”

Once in a while, down by the sea

If you are lucky you might see.....a mermaid

sitting on a sun warmed rock

with her tail swishing in the warm sea

and combing her long, glossy hair.

Young ones all about her as she tells the stories they need to hear.

Christmas in New Zealand is beach time so keep your eyes wide open.



President's Report *August 2014*



Well, the end of another year fast approaches and with the new year looming on the horizon we often take stock of the year that has been, whether we have fulfilled the expectations we had for it, what celebrations and what regrets, what resolutions we have for the year ahead...

for me it has been, in some ways, just another busy year. Between caring for my sweet girls and my teaching obligations, time has kept flying past at an alarming rate. However, there has also been some time for me to be involved with storytelling, which is my 'me' time. I was very fortunate to once again have the support of the Southland Literacy Association to attend the US National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough at the beginning of October. This festival, and the talented people there, never fails to inspire me, both personally for my own telling, and also for the direction of storytelling in New Zealand.

In all likelihood the people reading this are involved with storytelling in their own way and in their own area of our little country – after all, this is a storytellers' magazine. And we assume that you are involved because you believe it is a worthwhile way to use your precious time. I know I do! The Guild was set up to provide support and communication between all the various tellers scattered throughout our land and to provide cohesive information for anyone wanting to find out about storytelling and storytellers in New Zealand. It has been saddening to hear of people not supporting the Guild because "it doesn't do anything for me". I feel the need to ask, "What do you want / expect from membership?" and "What did you do to support the Guild and other tellers?" and, "Is \$25 a year too much to ask to show your support of what we're trying to do? If you aren't satisfied by what you get from membership why not work to help bring about change and to build a strong community of storytellers?"

Once again, the AGM was resoundingly silent – just Liz and I. The phone call cost only some time and effort (call costs are covered by the Guild)

and yet we once again had some apologies, some proxies granted, but no one actually committing to a simple phone call. If I were a "glass-half empty" person I would be thoroughly disheartened by this. But neither Liz nor I are that way, so we keep trying to build the vision we have of a strong Guild with active and supportive members – we know you're out there, many of you actively telling, many of you actively listening. So, if you have any suggestions, complaints or ideas please do email or call me – I'd love to hear from any of you. Silence is not for me!

A new year lies ahead, new challenges, new possibilities, new stories. Let's make it a year worth talking about.
Happy telling, all.

Tania Faulkner-McKenzie
andrewtania@hotmail.com



Editor's Report

We still need to have you all contributing to make this a representative magazine.
Thank you so much to those who contributed to this issue.

DEADLINE for next issue is **mid-March for April issue.**

Secretary Report

We have 1 new member – welcome Linda Hansen in Titahi Bay.
We still have 28 members. 3 live in USA, 1 in the UK. 5 group affiliations.
This means 33 memberships.
David Guthrie has resigned and we thank him for his interest and support over the years.

We called the AGM for the 30th of November.

We NEEDED the numbers.

Here is the report of the results of that meeting:

We had 5 proxies; 7 apologies; 2 present.

We waited 10 minutes but fortunately the proxies meant we had a quorum.

We kept the subscriptions the same. That is \$25 for individuals, \$30 for groups and international.

New members this year - Rob Waanders; Patricia Dye; Step into Story; Linda Hansen; Victoria Burnett;
Heather Perriam; Shonaleigh
Members left - Marie Murdoch; Mavis Ross; David Guthrie

Election of officers and committee:

President - Tania Faulkner-McKenzie; Secretary/Treasurer - Liz Miller;

Vice-President - Antoinette Everts

Committee - Mary Sheddon and Gaye Sutton

Liz will continue as editor unless someone else offers.

Website – we have updated our web-site and it is available, now, for all members to use with their personal code. A web-site is only as effective as the members make it. We cannot make up things to add to it. You need to post your events, stories, ideas and your name and profile.

We cannot do that but if you do the web-site will have value.

If you cannot figure it out ask our new web master, Hemi Ruatoto – hemi.ruatoto@gmail.com

We considered what we should do about members who do not pay and do not resign.
We feel we should not carry forgetful members for too long. Maybe one year?

We would have discussed ideas for using some of our funds but will discuss it through the Storyline and maybe by email.

Meeting closed officially after we waited 10 minutes.

Treasurer's Report

The audit was complete and we sent you all the balance sheets.

We had \$7476.79 when the audit was complete.

At the end of October we had \$7441.48

As the bank balance sheets don't arrive until the middle of the following month we cannot give you the November balance yet.

Regional News

Southland

Last issue we talked about a TV programme Lisa hoped to produce but seemingly it didn't receive funding as we haven't heard back.

That is sad as it would have placed our art in front of a bigger audience.

However, we are right in the midst of our planning for the Storytelling component of the 2015 Southland Arts Festival.

Tania and I compiled a list of names to approach.

Our first email brought a positive response and so in May we will have Antonio Sacre from California here in Southland.

We heard him at the midnight cabaret session and were enthralled. Then I spend a couple of hours chatting in a lovely coffee shop in Silver Lake, LA. He has a wonderful spirit and has done work with both children and adults.

Our second invitation was reluctantly refused as Donald Davis has every May until 2018 booked but he has pencilled that one in for us.

Now we are thrilled to have an agreement from another powerful teller – Regi Carpenter from the St Lawrence River area.

Both Tania and I are excitedly awaiting the response from the ILT as the Literacy Association has applied for a double mike sound system for us to use when the frequency our present one uses is no longer available.

Southern Storytellers

Term 4 is always our Action term, starting off with the Children's Workshop on 5th November. In response to all the hard work done by Tania and her team, 35 year 6,7,8 pupils from the city and the province had registered for this well-established event.

As usual, the day at Lindisfarne was a happy blend of telling, enhancing their stories and practising skills with fun activities in 5 workshop groups. Enjoying great catering and making new friends was also an important part of the day.

From this, most were able to attend the dinner at the Ascot Hotel, joined later by parents, teachers and friends who made a great audience to hear 14 of the children tell their stories.

We are grateful for the continued support of the Invercargill Licensing Trust in financing the enduring event.

Friday 21st November was our last concert for the year. Our own members' stories were complemented by 3 of those junior tellers. We were also delighted to have Shaun Swain deliver both a Shakespeare soliloquy and the tale of Hinemoa and Tutanekei, which he first told as a Year 6 student at our workshop several years ago. Shaun has just been declared Dux of his College and is soon off to University.

5 of our members and Liz/Dreamweaver also told and we paid tribute to Neville Cheyne, a member of long-standing, whose death occurred at the end of October. Neville will long be remembered for his low-key delivery and subtle humour.

25th November saw our final monthly meeting for the year and a Christmas get-together is fixed for December.

It has been a term of activity plus! with moments of great entertainment and satisfaction.

Nicol Macfarlane

Canterbury

"Into the Light" - Saturday 8 November

The Story Collective recently discovered a delightful new venue - Orange Studio - a friendly, helpful and cosy community recording studio that regularly offers concerts in its largest recording space. So this was the home to our latest event - Into the Light. The evening celebrated the arrival of spring, sunshine and all things luminous. We traversed the space between dark and light, night and day through storytelling, poetry, songs, prose excerpts and flash fiction readings. A packed house of keen listeners soaked up tales of the sun and candles through to epiphanies - including iPhones with embryo pics for grandparents (a poem just written that day by the highly acclaimed James Norcliffe) and naked night-time skinny dipping in Merivale swimming pools! There was a warm and supportive vibe as professional writers through to those sharing their work in public for the first time created a truly enchanting evening for all. We are looking forward to creating similar collaborative showcase evenings in the future.

Upcoming events:

A Midsummer Night Christmas,

Wednesday 17 December, Avon Loop Community Cottage, 28 Hurley Street

The Story Collective's Christmas celebration and final story circle for the year will be an open night for anyone to bring a favourite Christmas or summer story, song or poem to share - or just come and listen. We'll be co-creating a fun and relaxed community evening. Bring a plate of food to share if you can. Then we'll see you back at the Cottage 7.30pm, Wednesday 18 February 2015 for the start of monthly story circles (third Wednesday of the month) in the new year.

Tale Trails

In late summer we'll be offering an exploration of special places and spaces in Christchurch through traditional and true stories.

Check out [Facebook.com/TheStoryCollective](https://www.facebook.com/TheStoryCollective) over the summer for more details and the confirmed date(s).

Sharon Moreham

Events

This is the address if you wish to listen to the Replay Radio interview of David Guthrie with David Steemson on Spiritual Outlook.

David has been a member for a long time and this was a very interesting listen.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/spiritualoutlook/audio/20156374/spiritual-outlook-for-23-november-2014>

Members may be interested in the inaugural Norfolk Island Storytelling Festival, 20-24 Jan 2015.

The itinerary showcases stories of the island and her people, historical, funny and cultural. We will also introduce Tanya Batt, an amazing internationally renowned storyteller, writer & professional fairy, hailing from Waiheke Island in New Zealand, who will share her wealth of stories.

Norfolk Island has a vivid history, expanding early Polynesian settlements, penal settlements and the arrival of the Pitcairn settlers (descendants of the Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian wives) in 1856 - the islands residents today. This heritage has shaped the unique and fascinating culture of Norfolk Island, its' distinct characters and friendly people, traditions and a unique language. Be fascinated by our Island paradise. An amazing few days to savour and enjoy for all, singles, families, young or old who love a good tale!

Louise Tavener

GO NORFOLK ISLAND

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Contributions

Long Time Past

I was delighted with the gift I recently received from my granddaughter who had been on vacation in South Africa.

These little nativity set dolls (pictured on our cover) are hand-made from banana fibre grass. Instantly I had a flashback to a memorable scene at a Storytelling Workshop in Invercargill in 1978 when "Dreamweaver" Elizabeth Miller introduced the internationally renowned African-American storyteller, educator and librarian Professor Spencer G. Shaw, with the words of Lorenz Graham's story "Every Man Heart Lay Down".

This is the Christmas Story told in the words and speech patterns of African people newly

acquainted with English, written by a missionary in Liberia in the 1920's.

Long time past
Before you papa live
Before him papa live
Before him pa's papa live
Long time past
Before them big tree live
That time God live."

More of Lorenz Graham's bible stories are published in his book "How God Fix Jonah."

Professor Shaw was in demand as a tale-teller and teacher of his craft until his death in 2010 at the age of 93.

He travelled the world teaching and telling his stories.

On a website of tributes to him I found this from Margaret Read McDonald:

"... one day he called to ask if I wouldn't love to host a visiting NZ teller at Bethell Library. This teller had hosted Spencer on his tour of NZ and of course he was excited to show his new friend Seattle hospitality.

When the day of the performance arrived, I was amazed to see the glass doors of the library part and short Spencer enter, steering the arm of a very tall, very pale, and very barefoot lady in a diaphanous lavender gown, with sparkles covering her face, hands and feet.

Spencer gave no intimation that anything was unusual. This was the inimitable NZ teller Elizabeth Miller.

The children were rapt, asked for weeks when the "sparkle lady" was going to come back. . . .

I do love the memory of the very dignified Spencer and the totally ethereal Liz arm in arm . . . "

I, too, do love the memory of Professor Shaw with Liz and our group of Southern Storytellers "sitting at the feet of the Master", entranced by the magic of his storytelling.

And I thank my friend "Dreamweaver" Liz who was the inspiration for bringing him to Invercargill, and for one of the really great Storytelling highlights I have experienced.

These little dolls have evoked memories I shall forever cherish.

Mary Sheddan



Spencer G. Shaw

Antoinette reports on the Jonesborough storytelling festival in Tennessee, USA.

It's the first weekend in October. There are 5 huge tents, 35 world famous storytellers, 12,000 visitors in a tiny historic village in the back blocks of Tennessee, USA - that's the Jonesborough annual storytelling festival. Three days of hour - long sessions of storytelling, with time to walk to another tent in between - and know that you are missing out on the other storieshow can you choose ?

It was with great delight that I met up with Liz Miller and Tania Faulkner-McKenzie at the 42nd Jonesborough Storytelling Festival. They had flown all the way from New Zealand while I had only driven 9 hours from Baltimore. And there, too, was Diane Ferlatte!

We crowded into the huge tents, some jam packed. We heard wonderful stories. Carmen Deedy told about the beautiful cucaracha cockroach of her native Cuba - and later that evening sent shivers up our spines with a horrible ghost story told from the bandstand on the dark river bank. Connie Regan-Blake left us gasping

with terror and suspense with her ghost story; what timing, voice and pace control.

Sue O'Halloran told heart wrenching stories from Ireland. Bill Lepp (famous for his book "The King of Little Things") had us in stitches with his clever, fast moving family stories. Regi Carpenter shared about her childhood of poverty where a trip to the dump was a poignantly funny way to get treasures.

The colourful Healing Force family involved us in their rhythmical songs and chants of African stories.

And we all had a chance to tell, if we wanted to, at the Swapping Grounds where the audience sat on hay bales and you told to whoever was there. We were sad to leave and say good bye for yet another year. It was a wonderful experience to be at Jonesborough.

Antoinette Everts



Tania, Liz and Antoinette
(your officers)



Ed Stivender with Antoinette

Why would you pick the perfect flower
When you could have watched it grow?
It's such a careless waste of life
When you pick the Arctic Rose.

This was written beneath an ancient beaded coat in
at display of such work at the Autry Museum in LA

SualinAginkark – American Indian

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,
Listen to the DON'TS,
Listen to the SHOULDN'TS,
The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS,
Listen to the NEVER HAVES,
Then listen close to me –
ANYTHING can happen, child,
ANYTHING can be.
Shel Silverstein in "Where the sidewalk ends."

The Storyteller by Barbara Erskine

I am a storyteller.
I sit by the fire
With the light at my back
And wait for you to come.
I am a storyteller.
One by one you draw near
And sit in the shadows
Silently
To wait
For the weaving of words.

I am a storyteller.
I paint pictures in your head
Which dance and spin and live
And change the world into
Mirrored glass.

I am a storyteller.
I conjure the sea
And juggle the stars.
I deal cards
I cut the pack
And captive, with a shiver,
You glance over your shoulder
Into the night.
I am a storyteller.
I hold the strings in my hand.
I command your tears

And I let you laugh
And you hold your breath
As I weave my tale.

I am a storyteller.
I hold the reins.
I knit with emotion
At the foot of the blade
Splashed with your blood.
I tell them your history.
Then I turn my back again
Into anonymity and
Silence.

I am a storyteller.
You must listen with care.
I can banish your boredom
And teach you to listen
But when I finish
I will no longer be there.

I am a storyteller.
When the flames die
At last I am quiet.
You go back to your houses;
To the lights and the noise.
And I fade back into the dark.

Sent in by Bertha Tobias

Neville Guthrie of the Timaru Story Spinners' Circle has sent this poem. He says he likes to write and this was inspired when he was one of the many volunteers who spent many weeks up the McAuley River in the years 1999 – 2000 building a mountain hut. The poem was written later to introduce a ghost in the river valley. The organising committee had a copy hung in the hut for its opening by our then Prime Minister, Helen Clark. To the best of Neville's knowledge it is still there.

The Ferryman

Mungo was a ferryman at the Tekapo River.
People, freight and stock over it he'd deliver
in a whaleboat, passengers he rowed across.
An unsteady punt served for dray and horse.
Pedestrians one shilling, horsemen half a crown.
A shilling for each bale of wool sent down.

Uneducated, superstitious but mathematically sound
Knew his pennies, florins and crowns to the pound.
Quick to count up and know if short changed.
Cheated he'd shout and howl like deranged.
Coins clinking in his pocket, captain of his ship,
His confidence growing with every trip.

At the end of each day he'd put it away
For the money he took belonged to John Hay.
Some coins shiny bright, others worn thin.
All of them kept in an old cocoa tin.
Sovereigns of gold he liked to sit and hold
Dreaming he'd become a grand ruler of old.

Years at sea so much money he had never seen.
No round golden portraits of a distant queen.
Mungo always knew just how many he had.
To polish these gold coins made him glad.
At night he liked to set them up in a row.
By lamplight they seemed to live and glow.
A wild nor'wester racing down the lake,
New felt hat from a traveller did take.
Mungo sprinted after, across the plain,
Breathless and red-faced brought it back again.
Brushing dust from crown and battered brim
Sixpence for his trouble the traveller handed him.
That night his sixpence added to the golden row
Line uneven so, a sovereign to his pouch did go.
Sure no one would learn, more tips he worked to earn
Swapping each sixpence for a sovereign in its turn.
Harder he worked, higher his gold portraits mounted,
Each evening by lamplight polished and counted.

A kilted highlander crossing asked about the route
Noting Mungo's pocket added "Where d'ya hide yer
loot?"
His heart skipped a beat, how could a shepherd know?
Had others guessed? What to do? Where could he
go?
That night he put his treasures in a stout leather bag,
Rolled it in his bedding and made up aswag.

Miles up the lakeshore before it was light,
Camped in a gully by day he kept out of sight.
Great flocks of ducks at the head of the lake,
A food supply just waiting for him to take.
Crossed the McAuley by Lillybank track,
Headed up river like he wasn't coming back.

No one knows his real name or what became his fate.
In river matagouri was found an old brown plate.
And a shelter built of stones by a waterfall.
From the falling water some hear a mournful call.
As night shrouds McAuley, wind whistles down the gut,
Eerie howls and screams keep visitors in the hut.

Somewhere up that river rests a bag of coins of gold.
Somewhere up that river Mungo's story could be told.
You wouldn't go unseen searching for that haul.
A spirit walks those terraces, hears the keas call.
Widening windless ripples on a turbid tarn you see,
Faint phantom footsteps cross a shingle scree.

A feeling someone's watching among towering peaks,
A spirit yet to find the solitude he seeks.
Take memories of sunsets, a brilliant nor-west arch,
Recall a million gentle snowflakes on the march.
Respect the works of nature, care where you tread.
Mountains guard the secret of McAuley's river bed.

Neville Guthrie

You will smile as you read this

Because as stupid as it may sound, this is exactly what is done!

GOD to **ST. FRANCIS**:

Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS:

It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers 'weeds' and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD:

Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS:

Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD:

The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS:

Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little they cut it-sometimes twice a week.

GOD:

They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS:

Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD:

They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS:

No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD:

Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS:

Yes, Sir.

GOD:

These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS:

You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD:

What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life.

ST. FRANCIS:

You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD:

No! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS:

After throwing away the leaves they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD:

And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS:

They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD:

Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE:

"Dumb and Dumber", Lord. It's a story about...

GOD:

Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis.

A blonde walked into a bank in New York City and asked for the loan officer. She said she was going to Europe on business for two weeks and needed to borrow \$5,000. The bank officer said the bank would need some kind of security for the loan so the blonde handed over the keys to a new Rolls Royce. The car was parked on the street in front of the bank, she had the title and everything checked out. The bank agreed to accept the car as collateral for the loan. The bank's president and its officers all enjoyed a good laugh at the blonde for using a \$250,000 Rolls as collateral against a \$5,000 loan. An employee of the bank then proceeded to drive the Rolls into the bank's underground garage and parked it there. Two weeks later the blonde returned, repaid the \$5,000 and the interest, which came to \$15.41. The loan officer said, "Miss, we are very happy to have had your business and this transaction has worked out very nicely, but we are a little puzzled. While you were away we checked you out and found that you are a multimillionaire. What puzzles us is why would you bother to borrow \$5,000?" The blonde replied, "Where else in New York City can I park my car for two weeks for only \$15.41 and expect it to be there when I return?" Finally, a smart blonde joke.

If you are a dreamer, come in.
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
a hoper, a pray-er, a magic-bean-buyer,
If you are a pretender,
Come sit by my fire,
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
Come in! Come in!

Shel Siverstein

Memories are Powerful, Meant to be Shared and Savoured.

The reason you are so pleased by recollection is that nostalgia brings the past into focus and lets us savour special moments by creating a stage where everyone can live again. . . you are allowed to observe as a generation of people brush aside the cobwebs of time , to share delightful stories of long ago.

Ventura County Star, Ventura CA

Mary Shedd sent these two pieces in for us to share.

This is the editorial from the International School of Storytelling Newsletter November 2014.

It is a school based in Jonesborough, Tennessee and there is always much of interest in the newsletters they email to me.

"So... tell me, how did you end up as a storyteller"?

I am sure many of you storytellers are familiar with this question...

The answer is of course always a story

In my case it all started 20 years ago, while I was training to become a medical doctor. It was 1994 and

somehow my own life story led me to Africa, to work in an open field hospital, helping the refugees who escaped the genocide and violence in Rwanda and had fled to the neighbouring country Zaire. We were a small medical team, and I felt like a tiny droplet in an ocean of suffering, facing the consequences of a massacre that took the lives of close to one million people in 100 days. I treated dying children, men and women from both fighting tribes, the Hutu and Tutsi, who for me looked all the same, all of them - human beings. I witnessed some of the most horrific actions that human beings can inflict on each other during war time.

This experience changed my life completely and was the beginning of my spiritual quest.

With a wounded soul I decided to leave the medical training and go travelling around the world in search of some answers for the painful questions that were burning in me. I was unsatisfied with just the "healing of the physical body" that we offered as a medical team. I was angry that the world was not there to help, and I wanted to find another way of healing, some form of social healing, to help treat the root causes and core issues that start wars like the one I had witnessed.

My quest kept me travelling for a few years in which I met many people from various nationalities and backgrounds. Each person had a story to tell and listening to these stories I came to realize the incredible power stories held in shaping the reality on this planet. 13 years ago I came across the School of Storytelling (and how that magically happened is another good story...) I took the 3 months course as a student and ever since felt like I have found my medicine.

The path of the storyteller proved to heal and transform the wounds I suffered in Rwanda into new courage, hope and vision. I feel grateful that through my work at the School of Storytelling I have been fortunate to be able to share the gifts of imagination and vision with many people, including people in areas of conflict and war.

As a personal way of marking the 20th Anniversary of the Rwanda genocide and its influence on me, I will be teaching a new Storytelling as a Healing Art course this spring, which is for me another step for the body of work called "Healing Words" which I have been developing since 2007.

There are other wonderful stories from our colleagues and graduates about the special light they bring to the world through their work with storytelling. John Naker in South Africa is weaving story into his teaching in the classroom helping children to find their voice; Julie Neale is doing work with parents and children on a Barnardo's Charity project; and finally there is the news from Inger Lise about her recently published book *The New Pathway - Storytelling as a Pathway to Peace*.

Warm blessings to you all

Roi Gal-Or

Fall _____

When my son was three and he saw the maple leaves falling through the air he said, "When do the leaves jump up again?"

Jay O'Callahan

The Writers' Group _____

One of the high delights of my work has been running a Writers' Workshop on Tuesday nights at our house. Most of us in the group have been together for thirteen years. At the last meeting I had people shut their eyes and I handed out oak leaves. With their eyes shut they were to touch the leaves for four minutes. Then they were to look at the leaves and take six minutes to write.

My oak leaf was a world. It was red and brown, the edges were sharp and on the face of the oak leaf there were small brown bumps, several holes and a tear. This oak leaf felt winds, heat, rain, hail and cold. It had changed as we all do. It was as beautiful as any jewel. Ah, the beauty that's close at hand.

"...do you hear them, the leaves, as they scratch and scitter, in our worn palms?" - Jenny Maas

"You were not who I expected. My mind envisioned you as something different. I was so certain." - Barbara Prince

"Holding, touching, eyes shut I see dancer: flaring flamingo skirts..." - Deedee Agee

Jay O'Callahan

"I love Thanksgiving season - a perfect time to focus on gratitude . . . and appreciations. If you have family and friends gathering during the holidays, here is a new tradition you might try: Go around the dinner table and have each person offer what they believe the person sitting to their left is grateful for. It can shine the light on new levels of gratitude, discovery and connection. Gratitude for me leads into giving and receiving appreciations. These are key elements to my storytelling workshops. I find that having a 'listening partner' who gives appreciations of what they have heard illuminates, deepens and strengthens the experience of the person telling. And the next step is for the storyteller to give themselves appreciations - what they liked in their telling.

So often in our lives we focus on what needs to change, what could have been done better, and that can drown out our creative voice. My workshops are all about encouraging our creativity as we bring our stories to life. "

This came in an email from Connie Regan-Blake and although it was talking about a workshop she is running and an American tradition I think there is food for thought for us, too.

THE LEGEND OF THE BEFANA

(I have combined several versions but my oral version adds and deletes with the living audience as you will, too)

Liz Miller

Many, many years ago in a little village in Italy there lived an old woman known to her neighbours as La Befana. She was not a very friendly person. It was not because she didn't want to be, but because she simply didn't have the time to visit with her neighbours.

La Befana was always too busy to spend her time talking about unimportant things.

Her little house must be kept spotless. Day after day La Befana dusted and dusted, polished and polished, swept and swept. Even SHE couldn't tell you how many brooms she had worn out. Between making new ones and wearing them out with her endless sweeping, La Befana was always busy.

One winter morning she was up at daybreak as usual. Sweep, sweep, sweep went her little broom. Her bright eyes darted back and forth lest she miss a speck of dirt hiding in a corner.

She had already swept the snow from her pathway.

She was so hoping no one would come calling.

Suddenly there was a knock at her door. La Befana sighed impatiently. Now who could that be at such an early hour?

And why should anyone interrupt her in the midst of her cleaning?

Reluctantly she went to the door and opened it just a crack and peered out. And then in amazement she opened it wide.

For there, outside in the early morning light, she saw a wondrous sight.

Standing before her in the winter snow were three men. Surely these were kings. No one else could be wearing such beautiful robes or bearing such costly gifts in their hands.

"We are seeking a young child who was born in Bethlehem. We have seen his star in the East and are journeying there so we may offer him our gifts. For it has been spoken by the prophets that one would be born who would be King and we are sure this is his star. But we cannot travel until night when the star can be seen and we are so cold. Could we warm ourselves at your fire, good woman?"

La Befana invited them in to rest and warm themselves at her fire. There was a big pot of soup on the fire and she offered bowls of the good food to warm them inside as well.

The Three Kings started on their way once the night came and they could see that star and find their way. But then they stopped. One of them turned and said,

"Will you not come with us, old woman, so that you, too, may worship the young child?"

La Befana was startled. Go with them? Impossible!

She hadn't yet finished her day's sweeping. She couldn't leave her work undone. She asked if they could just wait a bit while she finished but they had to go on while the star was to be seen.

And as the Three Kings journeyed onward, La Befana stood in her doorway looking after them until they were out of sight.

Then she went back to her work. But somehow she couldn't seem to care whether she found every speck of dust or not.

Her mind just wasn't on her sweeping. She kept thinking and thinking.

Why hadn't she accepted the invitation of the Kings to journey with them?

She, too, would like to see this young babe who the prophets had foretold would someday be King of the Jews. She had never seen a king. This was a baby king. A baby. Those kings had gifts for a grown-up king. She knew what a baby would like, even if he was a king.

Her mind was made up. She would try to overtake the Kings and go with them to find this new king.

So she set out with never a backward glance at the little house that had meant so much to her. She had a bundle of baby toys on her back and a staff to help her through the snow.

She could see the tracks in the snow and followed them. But soon the falling snow filled them in and she couldn't tell which star when she looked into the sky.

Sadly enough, La Befana never overtook the Kings, nor did she ever reach Bethlehem.

However, every place she stopped where there was a child she would leave a little gift.

She was hoping, hoping that someday she would find the young babe she was seeking.

In Italy today the legend of La Befana is still remembered.

On January 5th, Epiphany Eve, in memory of the gifts the Magi brought to the Christ Child, Italian children receive gifts.

And the one who brings those gifts is La Befana, the old lady who was too busy with her sweeping to journey with the Three Kings.



Storytelling Groups/contacts

Regional Contacts

The person nearest to you should be happy to talk to you or help you arrange an occasion or start a group or just talk storytelling! If there is no one in your area perhaps YOU would be the regional contact. Let us know.

Auckland	7.30pm 1st Thursday of month	Margaret Blay 09 630 6774	40 Croyden Street, Mount Eden, 1024 margaretblay@gmail.com
Thames	7.30pm 1st Wed of month	Jackie Black 07 868 1181	29 Station Road, Puriri, RD1 Thames
Tauranga	Last Thurs of month	Penny Guy	penny.guy@rely.usrful.com.nz
Central Hawkes Bay	Phone for details	Mary Kippenberger 06 856 8367	212 Argyll Road, RD1 Otane marykipp@hotmail.com
Wairarapa	Email for details gaye@storyweaver.co.nz	Gaye Sutton	Gaye Sutton, Te Pukeko, Chester Road, Rd1
Manawatu	Phone for details	Ken Benn 06 359 5024	3 Hardie Street, Palmerston North, kenbenn@paradise.net.nz
Wellington	7.30pm 1st Tuesday of month	Tony Hopkins 04 381 3307 txt 027 737 3185	wellingtonstorytellerscafe@gmail.com
Blenheim	7pm, 2nd Thursday monthly	Katrina Oliver 03 577 7787	katrinao@xtra.co.nz
Canterbury	7.30pm third Wed of the month The Avon Loop Com. Cottage 28 Hurley Street, Christchurch	Sharon Moreham Ph 03 967 7888 Mob 022 121 3648	thestorycollectivechch@gmail.com
Timaru	3.30pm last Tuesday monthly in Timaru Library	Margaret Dockrill 027 292 5270	dockrill@xtra.co.nz
Dunedin	Phone for details	Kaitrin McMullan 03 467 9550	305 Malvern Street, Dunedin mail@kaitrin.co.nz
Invercargill	7.30pm 4th Tuesday of month	Heather Perriam 021 180 6690	hrp@xtra.co.nz
Balclutha	7pm 2nd Wednesday monthly	Vicki Woodrow, Clutha Library	raine@ihug.co.nz
Okato	7 pm 1 st Thursday of the month Step into Story	Lesley Dowding 06 772 4545	lezley@xtra.co.nz

Sender
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c/o Elizabeth Miller
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Invercargill - 9812
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