



A Twist of Yarn

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Contents

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| From the President..... | 1 |
| Events..... | 2 |
| ◆ Belmont Library..... | 2 |
| ◆ World Story Day..... | 2 |
| ◆ National Gathering..... | 2 |
| ◆ Storytelling Cafe..... | 3 |
| ◆ Training Program..... | 3 |
| Vale J. G. Pinkerton... | 4 |
| Articles..... | 5 |
| ◆ Thread of Life..... | 5 |
| ◆ John Hockney..... | 7 |

From the President.

Wow! What a start to the year! We're only a month out from the AGM and so much is happening. There's a new energy blowing through the story world, not just here in the west but right across the continent and out over the waves. A national gathering/conference in Sydney is being planned for the end of July, Ingrid Ipp has organized several storysharings at Belmont Library, Bill Park has organized an intro to storytelling/sharing at Joondalup Library and 200 Guild brochures went out to the attendees of a Night With Our Stars, thanks to Jenni Woodroffe. But there's more! Jenny Hill is running her storytelling training program again this year with a therapeutic storytelling component (open to non-students), the Storytelling Cafe organized by myself and Jenny Hill is still going strong, and we've also had visits from international storytellers Wendy & Michael Dacre from the UK (staying with Jenny Hill) and Cathryn Wellner from British Columbia staying with Jenni Woodroffe.

There is just so much happening, including several large well attended performances by Guild members, it's difficult to keep track of it all. Luckily I don't have to and I'd like to extend my heart felt congratulations to everyone who has organized events and contributed to the storytelling scene. It's you and your activities that give the Guild it's purpose. And remember if we can help with anything from auspicing to venues and advertising, to even just providing tea and biscuits at your events, let the committee know what you need and we'll see what we can do.

Keep up the great work everyone – it's people doing what they enjoy that makes others want to join in.

Jesse Williamson
President
March 9, 2009

Office Bearers

President:
Jesse Williamson

Treasurer:
Neville Blampey

Secretary:
Jesse Williamson

Editor:
Jenny Hill

Committee Members:
Glenn Swift
Jenni Woodroffe
Ingrid Ipp

EVENTS

Guild Story Sharing at the Belmont Library

Story sharing will be taken out into the community during the year. We have been warmly welcomed to tell at the Ruth Faulkner Library, Progress Drive, Belmont on the following days.

- Neville & Christine on Wed 8th April @ 18:30 - 20:00
- Brenda & Christine on Wed 8th July @ 16:30 - 18:00
- Ingrid & Jenny on Wed 14th October @ 18:30 - 20:00

All guild members are welcome to attend and tell. Audience participation is encouraged and welcomed.

World Storytelling Day – 20th March

This year the theme of World Storytelling Day is 'Neighbours'
To celebrate this day in Perth there are three events happening



1. 'Room for Stories' at Caversham Primary School.
Class teachers will rotate from room to room to tell a story and move on to the next class.
Facilitator: Neville Blampey
2. 'Introduction to Storytelling' [Open to the Public]
Saturday, 21 March, 2009 2.00-4.00pm at the Joondalup Library. Facilitator: Bill Park
3. 'Who is my Neighbour?' A storytelling concert at Our Lady of Mercy Primary School, Girrawheen.
Facilitator: Mabel Kaplan

National Gathering/Conference

Inspiration was brewed at the Tasmanian Storytelling festival last year to get together to discuss relevant issues around the future of storytelling in Australia. This was an initiative from both guild and non-guild performers. So a weekend has been set aside for a National Storytelling Gathering for Australia and New Zealand.

It will be held in Sydney on the weekend of the 24th-26th July.

Friday Night Storytelling Café

Greek Mythology comes to Fremantle.

*Join Robyn Grove, Jasmin O'Hara, Jennifer Tingley, Isabella and Jenny Hill
with*

Demeter, Chiron and "THE JOURNEY HOME" - Odysseus sets sail for Ithaca

This Friday 13th March, 7:30pm La Tropicana, 177 High St, Fremantle.

Storytelling Training Programme

Course One

The Art of Storytelling

The program will provide training in the basic skills of storytelling within the oral tradition. Through world stories from folk to myth we will explore the heart of stories, their dynamics, rhythm characterization, musicality, imagery, and how they come alive in us – our bodies, our speech and our audience awareness.

Tutors include:

Jenny Hill (storyteller) Sandy McKendrick (Puppeteer, Community Artist),Giri Mazella (Commedia del'Arte,) Noel Nannup (Indigenous Storytelling) Dale Irving (mask)

Tuesdays 5.30 – 9.00 beginning May 5th

Course Two

Therapeutic Storytelling

Stories help us to make sense of our lives. This series of workshops explores story within the "therapeutic" context; archetypal, traditional, spontaneous, personal, and anecdotal stories. Local practitioners will work with the application of the growing body of methodologies available. They include counsellors, art therapists, narrative practitioners, community workers and health professionals. Participants will develop individual projects and develop skills in spontaneous telling as well as hearing some wonderful "teaching" tales.

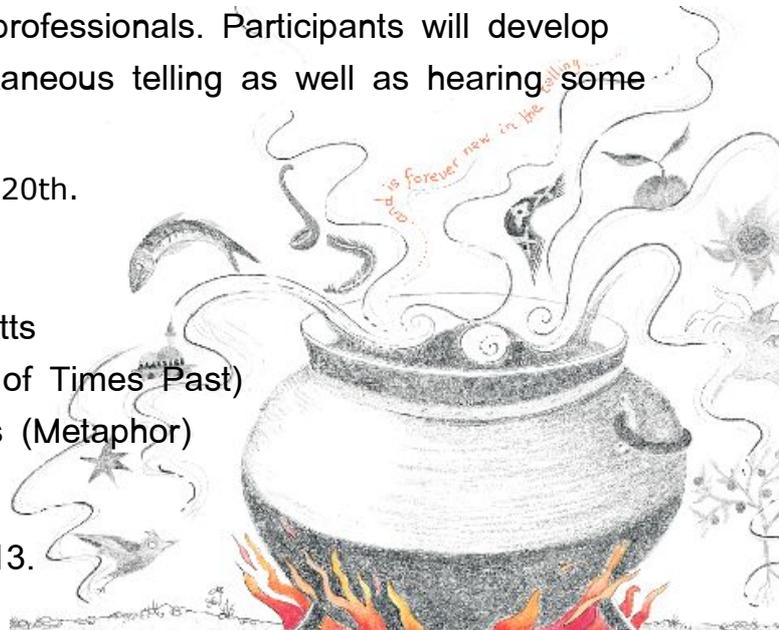
A series of 8 Wednesday evenings beginning July 20th.

Contributors include:

Leah Van Lieshout (Art Therapist), Robyn Betts (Drama Therapist), Vasanti Sunderland(Tales of Times Past) Ian Percy (Narrative Therapy,) George Burns (Metaphor)
To be confirmed: Marie Finlay(Corporate),

For more information call Jenny Hill, 93192813.

jennyhill@iinet.net.au



Obituary

Vale J. G. "Paw-Paw" Pinkerton

Western Australian storytellers who attended *The Rainbow Gathering* at Kingswood College will remember with affection the performance of Aaron Copland's *Rodeo* by JG Pinkerton and the Nedlands Symphony Orchestra held at the Octagon Theatre in September, 1990. JG and his wife Joan, were popular overseas guests at our storytelling festival and J.G's workshop *Finding and Telling Personal Family Stories* enhanced our understanding of this genre.

JG had previously lived in City Beach for seven years during the seventies and after his retirement from Texasgulf in 1988, storytelling became his second career, to which he devoted himself passionately. He served on the Board of Directors of NAPPS (the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling, parent of National Storytelling Network) for 6 years and also served on the Board of the International Storytelling Centre. He was the creator and moving force behind the establishment of *Tellabration! The Worldwide Night of Storytelling*, held in November and first launched in 1988. It is an evening which we have also celebrated here in WA. To quote from his website www.pawpawpinkerton.com "As with all storytellers, the stories we tell reveal who we are and the values we hold. Certainly, I like stories that are humorous for I believe laughter bonds us together. Also, when I find a story about a person helping others in some unexpected, even unmerited, way - I will be drawn to tell it. Stories are shared experiences ... and shared experiences are the basis of all human relationships."

JG passed away on Tuesday, 4th November, 2008 and we extend our deepest sympathy to Joan and his family. I treasure the care, concern and hospitality shown to me when I we first met in North Carolina in June, 1989 and the links we have maintained since then.

Jenni Woodroffe.

ARTICLES

A Note from the Editor:

A *Twist of Yarn* will come out four times in the year. It is a place where we can share articles to provoke thought, inspiration and professional development. We look forward to your contributions, either original or writings that you have been inspired by. The article below appeared in the magazine *Resurgence* in England in 2007, issue 221

Thread of Life - Stories are our inheritance.

STORYTELLING OCCURS all over the world, and stories are an essential part of every culture: a storyteller is someone gifted with memory who has a feeling for the thread of narrative.

My grandfather was a wonderful storyteller. His stories were so nourishing that I started to tell stories to my sister. We would throw a blanket over the washing line, make a pretend fire and fill a saucepan with water and a secret handful of rice and raisins. We would stir the rice until the water had turned white and starchy. The rice never cooked, but we'd eat it anyway. Then we'd curl up and tell stories. Our family lived a nomadic life, so stories helped to carry the threads of our lives from one place to the next.

Storytelling is highly developed in Central Asia, which, until a hundred years ago, was populated by nomadic people. As tribes followed their herds across mountains and steppes, they relied on the spoken word. Nomadic societies are economical in every aspect of their culture except storytelling. Stories are light, they shorten the road as you travel, they carry your history and they are your children's inheritance. The value of storytelling is expressed in this story from Kazakhstan, 'The Whole Brain':

It was the seventh day. God had finished making the world when he realised he had forgotten to give human beings their brains. So he filled a jug with brains, called an angel and said, "Go and give human beings their brains!" The angel flew down to Earth and found so many people that there were not enough brains to go round. So the angel gave each person a drop of brains.

When God looked down on creation he saw war, jealousy, hunger and tears. "Human beings have only got a bit of a brain each," he said. "I need someone with a whole brain to sort them out." So God made one more person and filled that person's brains right up to the top. He filled those brains with stories, songs, poems and sparkling

words. He sent the storyteller down to Earth, to tell and sing wisdom into foolish human hearts.

Central Asia is a repository for some of the longest and most elaborate epics in the world. Tellers fulfilled a spiritual role for their tribe, and stories would have been told to bless a camping ground; to pass on the wisdom of ancestors and celebrate festivals.

I HAVE MADE several trips to Central Asia to research oral traditions. One summer I found myself sitting in a round felt yurt on the steppes of southern Kazakhstan. The yurt was full of silk and felt hangings. Quilts and carpets were placed in a horseshoe-shape facing the yurt entrance. The women sat on one side of the tent, the men on the other, and the honoured guests in the middle. Tea was served - it was drunk from small bowls, which were only a quarter filled. This means that you only drink fresh, hot tea. Once your bowl is empty it is instantly refilled. Food was offered. There was plaited bread, cheese, slivers of green pepper, and bowls of dried apricots. Then we were served dishes of the softest rice and raisins. I was sitting in a tent, with storytellers and poets, eating rice and raisins! In between each mouthful, toasts were drunk, holding up bowls of tea, shots of vodka, or bowls of frothy kumys - fermented mare's milk. The toasts were beautifully spoken, the language embroidered as intricately as a Kazakh coat. Stories were told, songs sung and poems scribbled down and read hot from the page.

Through their fictional worlds, stories speak to us on many levels. I have witnessed how, despite deprivation and upheavals, Central Asian oral traditions have not died, and in many ways it is stories that have held communities together. The storyteller in Central Asia continues to be a voice for the nation - someone with a whole brain.

URKASH MAMBETALIEV is a remarkable storyteller in his seventies who lives in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. He is a famous Manaschi, a bard who specialises in telling the Kyrgyz epic Manas. His eyes twinkle as he describes a life given to stories. "I didn't choose, I was chosen by storytelling." He spoke about the responsibility of being a Manaschi. "You need a clean, open heart. You must never refuse to tell Manas or teach someone. It is your duty to pass it on." Such Manaschis are believed to be blessed, and audiences try to imbue themselves with their power - they will drink the drops of tea left in a Manaschi's cup, and Urkash often finds his shirt buttons missing after a performance! The Manas epic is vast, the story spanning three generations. Over two million verses have been collected. The first part of the story is twice as long as the Odyssey and the Iliad put together. Manas contains legends, histories and myths, depicting pre-Islamic gods, inter-tribal relations and old shamanic beliefs. Urkash told me a dramatic section of the epic. His storytelling

surpassed the boundaries of language: I saw the characters and scenes vividly. Urkash remarked, "Foreigners have frequently told me they can see the story, even though they don't understand the words." Urkash is committed to rejuvenating his traditions. His work represents a challenge to storytellers everywhere to become voices for something worthwhile, making our ancestors' tales meaningful for today. The story of *The Whole Brain* describes how much we need stories; that stories are in some way hard-wired into our brains. We are stories. The act of storytelling can bring courage, hope, peace and wisdom. It can imagine how things might have been, and, most importantly, how they could be.

Sally Pomme Clayton is a storyteller and lecturer on world oral traditions at Middlesex University.

John Hockney – Storyteller

On Tuesday, 3rd March an interesting interview took place on Classic FM when Margaret Throsby interviewed John Hockney - a storyteller from the Blue Mountains. He had recently published a book called *Remember When?: How to Unlock Your Life Story* published by Citrus Press. He has worked for some years as a professional storyteller and more recently has worked extensively in aged care. John uses visual displays of Old Collectibles (eg the black irons, washing boards, hot water jugs etc) that help trigger memories. He believes it is important to use all the senses and begins by using touch and shakes everyone's hand when he arrives and also when he leaves, thanking people for attending. He referred to his Life Stories Workshops as doodling with memory and in sharing memories, the tellers trigger the memories of other attendees. John stressed that storytelling is sharing - not just the telling - but listening too.

Jenni Woodroffe.

(Some folks might remember John from the Festival in Perth in 2005)

The Storytelling Guild of Australia (WA) Inc Newsletter

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Next Committee Meeting: April 8th 5:30pm at Ruth Falkner Library, Belmont.

Next Twist of Yarn: 2nd June.