



October 2008

Support and Appreciation for the Art of Storytelling In Kentucky Volume 4 Issue 4

Kentucky Storytelling Association

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Useful Links:

KSA Website

<http://www.kystory.org/>

National Storytelling Network Website

<http://www.storynet.org/>

Contact your Board

President, Donna Slaton
President@kystory.org
270-825-1478

President Elect

Message from our President Donna Slaton

Dear KSA members,

I am pleased to tell you that KSA had a busy summer and looks forward to an eventful fall. As your president I want to thank each of you for joining in the fellowship that is KSA.

I am proud to tell you that your executive board worked diligently to build a strong foundation for KSA and will continue to be strong with new incoming board members who have stepped up to continue the KSA mission. Please return your ballots as soon as you possibly can. If you have not received a ballot by October 1, please notify me or P J Beckett, Nominating Committee Chair. Ballots were mailed on September 15 and must be postmarked for return no later than October 15.

August 22nd, the youth event at the Kentucky State Fair which involved seven member volunteers and an audience of around 100, showcased the talents of ten delightful young storytellers. Helping to launch new storytellers is not only part of our mission as an organization but truly a heartwarming experience. Thanks to Pam Holcomb who did a great job of organizing the day. We were grateful and excited that Don Creacy's health improved enough that he could be there to help judge and encourage the young tellers and also provide technical assistance with the sound system. It was an awesome sight to see the students, including several little ones on stage in the arena at the state fair with a fairly large audience, storytelling with smiles and confidence! Wow! Thanks to Octavia Sexton and Bill Watson for judging, Mary Hamilton for scorekeeping and Betsy Fleischer for bringing a busload of audience.

I hope you will join us for the KSA Conference November 7th and 8th in Shepherdsville and soak up some of the joy of storytelling and story listening that is buzzing through KSA. We are very excited to be partnering this conference with The Knowledge Center on Deafness. This conference is about as close to the geographic center of the state as we will get. That makes it a great opportunity to meet and greet, tell and share, listen and learn. Hope to see you there. You have a schedule of wonderful workshops available and lots of talented tellers including some of the youth to entertain you and the open mike opportunity to tell your own story. "Where can you beat it?"

There will be a general membership meeting during the conference on Saturday and the next board meeting will be Sunday morning after the conference at the conference site. We hope you will take advantage of both of those opportunities to become more actively involved in helping KSA grow. And don't forget you can volunteer at the conference to help as room monitors, with registration, story store, door prizes etc. Another way to help KSA grow is to help recruit new members and sponsors, supporters and sustainers. The additional categories of membership provide an opportunity for friends of KSA and institutions to support KSA which is a 501(C)3 organization. Please visit the website www.kystory.org and renew your membership (perhaps with an added donation if you can) while registering for the conference. See you in Shepherdsville, I hope!

(vacant)

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Announcements

Your KSA Board Meeting
will be:

November 9,
Shepherdsville, day after
the conference, same
location as conference.

KSA Conference November 2008

By Betsy Fleischer

Shepherdsville is the place to be this November! An exciting new feature for this year is the combination of conferences of the KCD and the KSA!! Beginning on the evening of the 6th and continuing through the day on the 7th our partners, Knowledge Center on Deafness will be having their conference with guest artist Peter Cook, internationally known deaf storyteller and poet. Any one may attend this conference.

In the evening on November 7th KCD and KSA will have a combined Evening Open Mic Stories Concert with Peter Cook and Jennifer Rose. Put your name in a hat and if your name is pulled you get to tell a 5-10 minute story in the concert too! The time limit will be enforced.

On Saturday, the 5th KSA's conference will get off to a rousing start with the ever popular silent story game. As usual, all sessions will be interpreted and the facilities are handicap accessible. And there will be the Story Store. If you have any story items to sell, then bring them to the store along with your inventory sheet on Saturday between 7:00am-8:45am. Contact Betsy Fleischer at betsycat2@yahoo.com to get an inventory sheet to fill out before you come.

This year's workshops cover lots of ground - story development, oral history, story and interpreting, working with preschoolers, Spellbinder how-to, publishing your stories, wisdom stories, using ballads as a resource for story, and making story events accessible to the deaf. Our guest artists are Jennifer Rose, Kentucky Appalachian balladeer and educational singer, performer; and Peter Cook. And in between there will be open mic times so put your name in a hat. Door prizes will be given away and YES you must be present to win!

The annual business meeting is the place to bring your compliments, concerns and ideas. This is YOUR meeting, so come, listen, and speak up. Saturday will conclude with an Evening Open Mic Stories Concert.

What conference would be complete without food?? All meals will be on your own; there are lots of places to go to have a chat and a chew with your friends, new and old. Meet some folks, break some bread together, have a good time. Come one, come all.

Conference schedule at <http://www.kystory.org/conference/intro.shtml>.

The Kentucky Arts Council, the state arts agency, supports the 5th Kentucky Storytelling Conference with state tax dollars and federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.



New Creations—KSA member books and CDs

This new section of the KSA Newsletter highlights new storytelling products by KSA members, including books, Audio CDs and videos. Submit to KSA Newsletter Editor, no more than 400 words, products from current or immediately preceding year. Please find someone to write a review for your own work rather than self-reviewing. Thanks!

Oct 10 – deadline for Kentucky Storytelling Conference Advance Registration; members pay \$15 in advance, non-members pay \$20 in advance; everyone pays \$35 at the door.

Oct. 15 – postmark deadline for returning your KSA ballot

October 31 – your KSA dues renewal payment is due

Welcome New Members!

Charlene Bandurraga-Hole, David Johnston, Toni O'Neil, Linda Reeves and Nelle Williams.

Brief Survey: "Is it true?"

Please convey to Paschal Baute your preferred or choice answers to children who ask after your storytelling, "Is it true?" He is composing a brief article on potential answers for storytellers. Contact pbbaute@wx.net or (859) 293-5302, or mailing 4080 Lofgren Ct. Lexington, KY 40509. Email preferred. Results will be published in a future KSA newsletter.

Congratulations to Octavia Sexton and Lorraine Leadingham who were interviewed for the September 2008 issue of Kentucky Teacher magazine on storytelling in the classroom.

WANTED--storytellers and those aspiring to become storytellers.

Spellbinders is a national organization

Strange and Wonderful Things: A Collection of Ghost Stories with Special Appearances by Witches and Other Bizarre Creatures, by Thomas Freese, 2008, PublishAmerica, 978-1605639741, 15 illustrations, 148 pages, \$19.95, trade paperback.

Reviewed by Roberta Simpson Brown

Thomas Freese, a master of scary stories, has a new collection that should be on every reader's *must read* list. The title *Strange and Wonderful Things: A Collection of Ghost Stories with Special Appearances by Witches and Other Bizarre Creatures* says it all! These "strange and wonderful" stories offer a variety of content that will leave every reader shivering and satisfied! Suitable for all ages, this collection has surprise endings, fantasy, and scary tales that each reader can relate to personally.

The characters are like people we meet everyday: veterans, workers, gossips, car riders, campers, children, parents, etc. Freese's wonderful imagination takes these ordinary people and puts a unique twist on what happens to them. Whether you are reading about healing spirits or horrifying creatures, you will find them unforgettable.

After you finish stories like "Dust Bunnies," "The Witch's Rake," "Moving Graves," and "Whispers," you may be inclined to look over your shoulder to do a reality check! "Dust Bunnies" made me reach for my vacuum cleaner! I loved the unexpected endings to "The Witches Rake" and "Moving Graves," that were pure poetic justice! Sometimes bad people really do get what they deserve! With that in mind, I vowed, after reading "Whispers," never to gossip again! These stories really make you *think!*

If you should be frightened and unable to get some of these scary things out of your mind, read "The Healing Child." This story will inspire you and give you sweet dreams!

Like Freese's previous two books (*Shaker Ghost Stories* and *Fog Swirler*), this new collection is a book you will want to buy and keep for your personal library so you can read the stories over and over. Every story Thomas writes is well crafted with universal appeal. Not one of his stories is ever weak or boring! For skeptic and believer alike, this talented writer has provided material both thought provoking and totally entertaining.

Member Spotlight

This issue's Member Spotlight shines on Pam Holcomb.



Pam Holcomb tells "Granddad and Uncle El" at Pine Mountain Settlement School, Bledsoe, KY

Why did you join KSA?

I have a love of storytelling. I was intrigued when I found out about KSA and wanted to become a part of this organization. I was thrilled to find out

dedicated to spreading the magic of oral storytelling by training volunteers to become storytellers in their communities. In Lexington we have an active group of about thirty Spellbinders, telling folk tales and fairytales in our public schools at the elementary level. Each of us gives about four hours each month. Our group is funded by the Lexington Public Library which sponsors free training each summer for potential volunteers. We find it great fun and we're eager to share it with others. We invite potential volunteers to explore this exciting opportunity by Googling Spellbinders or attending one of our monthly meetings. Accompany one of us in our wonderful Spellbinders storytelling. Or join Paschal's Bluegrass study group. Catch Paschal Baute, Charlie Hardy or Charlie Eyer at this fall's KSA Conference. Greg Davis and Toy Lancaster will lead a workshop about Spellbinders. Contact Greg Davis, Lexington Public Library at 859-231-5554, or Paschal Baute, 859-293-5302 or pbbaute@paschalbaute.com

A New Storytelling Festival at the Lake Barkley Lodge

Barkley Tales Storytelling Festival
10/31/08-11/02/08

We all have a story to tell and you might get your chance as Lake Barkley

that there were other storytellers around KY. Being from the Southeastern part of the state, I thought I was a lone wolf! I never knew there were any other storytellers in the state! Plus, I wanted to learn all I could about storytelling. I quickly found out that these folks that make up KSA are a wealth of knowledge. I feel that in the 3 years I've been a member, I've learned as much as I did in 4 years of college!!

What so far have you liked about being a member of KSA?

The people! I have learned to love the folks of KSA - what a great group of people! I have so many new friends - and they all love storytelling! I also really like the conferences. I have learned so much useful information. I am also very proud of the KY Youth Storytelling Showcases. We are nurturing young storytellers - what a delight!

What kind of stories do you enjoy?

I really like all kinds of stories, but am partial to the old traditional mountain stories -the stories that I learned as a child. I like stories that speak to the heart.

How has your life been affected by stories from family or friends?

I have grown up with a rich tradition of stories. I learned stories while sitting at the feet of my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. I grew up in Southeastern KY sandwiched in between the Pine and Black Mountains. Stories were just a way of life for us. Everyone I knew had a story to tell. Many of the stories I tell come from my background, not only as having grown up in the mountains, but having been a school teacher there as well. My life has definitely been enriched by stories.

Kentucky at the National Storytelling Conference

By Mary Hamilton

"Wow, Kentucky storytellers really set the bar high," was the comment from more than one storyteller after hearing the Kentucky Showcase at the National Storytelling Conference, in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The Conference moves to different regions of the country. A single showcase of tellers selected from the hosting region has been a traditional Conference feature. The 2008 Conference committee broke with tradition by inviting every state in the Southeast Region to present a 90-minute showcase. By the luck of a random draw, Kentucky tellers performed first to kick off two full days of state showcases. Because I had the honor of emceeding the Kentucky Showcase, I also had the pleasure of hearing compliment after compliment on the quality of Kentucky storytellers, plus a few worries that Kentuckians has set the bar so high other state showcases might not measure up! Showcasing Kentucky tellers, selected by an out-of-state panel were: Don Creacy, Octavia Sexton, Graham Shelby, Pam Holcomb, and Cynthia Changaris.

Dennis Rader led the workshop, "The Three Little Pigs Revisited: Stories that Investigate Integrity." Beginning with The Three Little Pigs, participants investigated the ideal of integrity through story and conversation. Dennis asked: Do we build our house (metaphor for identity) out of straw, sticks, or bricks? What do we do when the wolf (metaphor for bad times) comes along? He also stated that integrity is essential to connection because trust - the energy that coheres community - is defined as reliance on integrity.

Participants also offered their stories about integrity in his workshop session. Betsy Fleischer, KSA Program Committee chair, served as a panelist for the discussion, "Other Kinds of Storytelling Events: Beyond the Festival Model," Betsy spoke about Wandering Tellers, the KSA performance and fund-raising partnership presented with Natasha's Bistro in Lexington, KY. Much to her surprise, Betsy received unexpected support and verification for her description from Natasha's sister-in-law, a storyteller from South Carolina. She told everyone how much her brother Gene and his wife Natasha enjoyed their partnership with KSA.

invites you to our first Storytelling Festival. Tell your story, share the joy of storytelling with others, and hear and learn from nationally-known master storytellers. Open to every one and suitable for all ages, the festival will feature Halloween tales, children's yarns, and a workshop for adult and young storytellers.

Contact Information:
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1131
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Park Manager-John
Rittenhouse

[KSA events from our
webpage:](#)

October 2-5, The National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. For more information, call 800-952-8392 or 423-753-2171 or contact info@storytellingcenter.net.

October 8-11, The 21st Annual Printing Partners Hoosier Storytelling Festival in Indianapolis, Indiana at the Military Park and the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center. Contact: Phone 313-576-9848 of info@storytellingarts.org.

October 10, 7-8 PM. Come hear ghost stories at Borders on Hurstbourne near Stoneybrook.

KSA Members Mary Jo Huff, Bill Watson, Martha McLeod, and Nina Coyer also participated in the National Storytelling Conference. Unfortunately Nina had to leave early, so Conference participants missed out on enjoying a story from her when her name was selected for the Story Slam on Sunday morning. KSA members also enjoyed seeing our webmaster Kate Dudding receive an Oracle Award for her service and leadership in the Northeast Region of the National Storytelling Network. In addition to working as the KSA webmaster, Kate has been active in her local guild, her regional organization and within NSN. She is the founder of the site: "Storytelling – It's News" at <http://www.storynet-advocacy.org/news/> which includes over 350 articles published since June 2003 which describe various uses of storytelling. Articles are all summarized and, when possible, a link is provided to the entire article. Amazing work! We can be proud that Kate also works with KSA.

If I left out any KSA folks who participated in the 2008 National Storytelling Conference, please, please forgive me. All in all, Kentucky was very well represented at the National Storytelling Conference.

News from the National Storytelling Network

Mary Hamilton

After serving as Kentucky's state liaison to the National Storytelling Network throughout the formative years of the state liaison program, Cynthia Changaris has resigned. Thank you, Cynthia for all your wonderful work. I, Mary Hamilton, am the new National Storytelling Network, Kentucky state liaison. Since KSA is an organizational member of NSN, editor Thomas Freese has agreed to include a regular "News from NSN" column.

KSA Members continue to receive a 10% discount on National Storytelling Network dues. To acquire this discount, you need to pay your dues either by phone 1-800-525-4514 or by mail (subtracting 10% from your check and including a brief note that you are a KSA member). Due to budget cuts NSN offices are only open Monday – Thursday and the offices have a new street address: 132 Boone St., Suite #8, Jonesborough TN, 37659. (This is a change in suite number only.)

Dollars from NSN – the National Storytelling Network awards several grants to both individuals and organizations. However, to be eligible to apply for most NSN grants, you must be an NSN member by October 31 of the year before applications are due. So, take a look at the past grant offerings at <http://www.storynet.org/Programs/Grants/>. If you believe you might want to apply for NSN member grant during 2009, join NSN right away.

Book Reviews - Have you written a book, published within the last year, that you consider a resource for storytellers? If so, send a copy to Jo Radner, Book Notes Editor, P. O. Box 145, Lowell, ME 04051 (physical address: 178 Merrill Road, Lovell, ME 04051) so your book can be considered for review in the Book Notes column of National Storytelling Magazine. Book Notes reports only titles of interest and use to NSN Members, including books about the storytelling art and applications of storytelling and newly published collections of stories. Novel, recordings, and picture books are not accepted. Materials are not returned.

Board election – Kentucky is in the Southeast Region of the National Storytelling Network. Current Southeast Regional Board Member Joseph Sobol's term ends in December. Caren Neile of Florida is our newly elected Southeast Regional Board Member. Learn more about Caren at <http://www.fau.edu/scms/neile.php> That is the link to her faculty page at Florida Atlantic University.

Thomas Freese will tell tales from his latest in a series of five ghost story and mystery books, *Strange and Wonderful Things*. Borders is located at 2520 Hurstbourne Gem Lane, Louisville, KY, 40220. Call for information at 502-495-6640.

October 10, 11, The Grand Rivers Storytelling Festival. Please contact the Badgett Playhouse Box Office at 888-362-4223.

October 14, Bill Watson will be doing his program "My Name's James" at the Scott County Public Library in Georgetown, Ky. Time TBA. Contact billwatson@hughes.net for more information.

October 17, Bill Watson will be at the Gallatin County Public Library in Warsaw, Ky. His program is "My Name's James." Time to be announced. Contact billwatson@hughes.net for more information.

October 18, 11 AM-2 PM. Thomas Freese will tell ghost stories and sign his newest book of fiction mysteries-*Strange and Wonderful Things*-at the Kentucky Artisan Center, in Berea. The Center is located at 975 Walnut Meadow Road, Berea, KY, 40403. Call for Information at 502-495-6640.

October 18, Mary Hamilton telling Spooky Tales at 2:00 PM for families and Haunting Tales at 7:00 PM for

The Kentucky Youth Storytelling Showcase

By Pam Holcomb

The Kentucky Storytelling Association Youth Storytelling Showcase Committee (KYSS): Don Creacy, Octavia Sexton, Lorraine Leadingham, Jessica Bryant, Donna Slaton, and Pam Holcomb are proud to announce that the Kentucky Youth Storytelling Showcase final competition was held August 22, 2008 at the Kentucky State Fair. What a special treat it was that day to hear such a talented group of young tellers. We were truly entertained and delighted to see such fine young people take such an interest in storytelling. However, that did not make for easy judging. The competition was very stiff and determination of the winners and torchbearers was especially difficult. First place winners in each category were:

Elementary school - Lauren Reed from Beechwood Elementary in Kenton County.

Middle school - Brashton McCoy from Bath Co. Middle in Bath County.

High school - Emma Wilczynski from Boone County High in Boone County.

Tandem team - Dylan Grimm and Tori Sager from Cannonsburg Elementary in Boyd Co.

The 2009 Kentucky torchbearers were chosen from all the contestants. These torchbearers will be showcased at the Kentucky Storytelling Association Conference November 7- 8, 2008 at the Paroquet Springs Conference Center in Shepherdsville, Kentucky. The torchbearers will submit a video of them telling a story to be entered in the National Youth Storytelling Showcase. The National committee will then select 20 tellers from all over the United States to compete for National titles in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee in June 2009. In 2008 the State of KY was privileged to have three young people among the twenty chosen to compete. Emilee Seaman who was chosen to be one of the 2009 torchbearers was also a torchbearer in 2008 and was chosen to compete at the National Competition in 2008.

We certainly have high hopes for our 2009 KY State Torchbearers:

Emma Wilczynski - Boone County

Lauren Reed - Kenton County

David Benning - Perry County (formerly from Harlan County)

Dylan Grimm and Tori Sager - Boyd County

Emilee Seaman - Muhlenberg County



2009 Kentucky State Storytelling Showcase Torchbearers: left to right - Dylan Grimm, Tori Sager, Lauren Reed, David Benning, Emilee Seaman and Emma Wilczynski

older kids, teens, and adults. Owensboro Museum of Science and History, 122 East 2nd Street, Owensboro, Ky. 42303. Call for information at 270-314-2937 or check out the website <http://www.owensboromuseum.com/>.

October 21, 7:00 p.m. Scott County Storytelling Guild at the Scott County Library, call 502-863-3566. 3rd Tuesday of the Month Story Swap. Bring out your best Scary Tales and Flaunt Them.

October 23, 7:00 PM At the Fleming County Public Library, Bill Watson will present a storytelling program "My Name's James." Contact billwatson@hughes.net for more information.

October 27, Wandering Storytellers at Natasha's Bistro. 8:00 p.m. Admission: \$5.00 Natasha's Bistro, 112 Esplanade, Lexington, KY. Contact: 502-484-3359 or www.beetnik.com. The theme for October is "Ghost and Monsters Inside and All Around." (Some of the scariest monsters live inside your head.) This is a KSA fund raising event.

October 27, Bill Watson will be telling stories at the Marshall County Public Library in Benton, KY. At 1:00 PM, his program is "My Name's James" and at 3:00 PM, he will tell ghost stories. Contact billwatson@hughes.net

The KYSS is grateful for all the hard work initiated by our former committee chair, Don Creacy. Don had to step down as chair in June after suffering some ill health. Without all of Don's forethought and perseverance, this wonderful venue for the youth of Kentucky would never have come to fruition. Don is still an active participant in the committee, but was forced to relinquish some of his many overwhelming responsibilities. Pam Holcomb is now serving as chairman of the committee. The Kentucky State Fair had a tremendous team of volunteers all working together to see that this day ran smoothly. Thank you to Mary Hamilton, Charles Wright, Bill Watson, Don Creacy and Donna Slaton. Also, Betsy Fleischer brought a bus load of her students to observe. It was especially nice to have an attentive audience to listen to the tellers. The KYSS would now like to enlist the aide of all the KSA members to coach, encourage, and mentor these fine young torchbearers.

Listening to constructive criticism

By Bill Watson

This past January I attended my 3rd W.O.W. weekend in Bethlehem, Indiana, run by Cynthia Changaris and Mary Hamilton. Gathered there were other storytellers working on their stories. It was the first time I went to a WOW weekend with a particular objective in mind. Other times I went just to learn how other tellers approached their stories and to pick up some techniques I could use in my telling.

This weekend was different. I collected and told Civil War stories for nearly ten years. I never tried to connect them in anyway—they were just stories I told. I wanted to take advantage of the Bicentennial Year for Lincoln and have a product to market. My main question was "How can I put these stories together?"

In the W.O.W. weekend each teller is given an hour to present whatever they wish and receive feedback if so desired, either spoken, written or both. All that is discussed during the weekend is considered to be private. What happens at W.O.W., stays at W.O.W.. Before writing this article, I wrote to Priscilla Howe and Joyce Slater asking permission to use their names as they were extremely helpful with their comments.

I don't know about you, but I had to learn how to take constructive criticism. After all, every story I tell is perfect. Every picture I take is without flaw. To learn that my telling needs work or that my photography needs improvement isn't easy to hear.

However I do know that if someone has the courage to tell me I have bad breath, there are probably 10 others with the same opinion who will not say anything about it wanting to spare my feelings. So, even though it is hard, I try my best to listen not so much to the good comments about my telling but more importantly to those things that are hard to hear or that I may not have even given any thought. As a result I constantly solicit from others – especially other tellers – advice on how I can improve my telling.

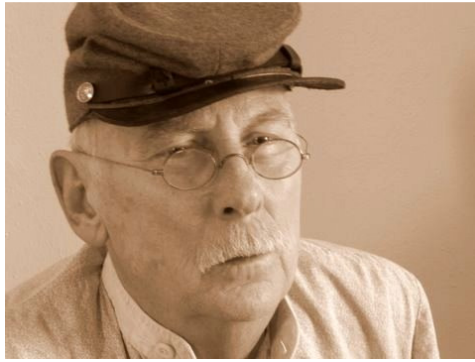
From the comments I heard and read from others at that WOW weekend I was able to develop a first person character by the name of James who brings to the fore the stories I told before in a way that makes 50 minutes seem to fly by the listener.

I encourage every teller who wishes to improve their craft to seek out folks who will be honest and caring to give advice about your telling. The W.O.W. weekend is only one vehicle to that end.

for more information.

October 30, 6-6:30 & 7:45 PM. Thomas Freese, storyteller and author will tell tales for children and families at the Speed Museum in two sessions.

Afterwards Mr. Freese will sign and sell his latest book, *Strange and Wonderful Things*. at the Speed Museum Gift Shop. Call for information at 859-634-2700.



Bill Watson in character

Books Reviewed

By Thomas Freese

November 7, 8. The Kentucky Storytelling Association 5th Annual Conference at Paroquet Springs Conference Center in Shepherdsville, KY off 1-65-Exit 117.

More details available at the Annual Conference link, www.kystory.org.

November 18, 7:00. The Scott County Storytelling Guild at the Scott County Library, call 502-863-3566. 3rd Tuesday of the Month Story Swap. We're Talking Turkey Here.

November 24, Wandering Storytellers at Natasha's Bistro, 8:00 PM. Admission is \$5.00. Natasha's Bistro, 112 Esplanade, Lexington, KY. Contact: 502-484-3359 or www.beetnik.com. The theme for November is "Attitude of Gratitude." This is a KSA fund raising event.

December 12, 13, 14, 2008. Working on our Work Storytelling Weekend, Storyteller's Riverhouse Bed & Breakfast, Bethlehem,

Thomas Merton's Gethsemani: Landscapes of Paradise, by Harry L. Hinkle and Monica Weis, 2005, 978-0-8131-2348-6, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, KY.

Although not technically a book on the subject of storytelling, I would like to write about the intriguing story about Thomas Merton and how this book touches upon many important facets of (I know at least) my storyteller's thoughts and process. The book is divided into these chapters: Discovering the Earthly Paradise, Finding a Home in Nature, Seeing Paradise with the Heart, Becoming One with the Sky Through Prayer, Discovering Compassion in the Wilderness. Ever since my youth I've been fascinated with nature and it has been a strong component of my later storytelling in written and spoken words. On page 52, the author states "Merton understood deeply that 'it is important to know where you are put on the face of the earth' ". My childhood was filled with exploring the natural world in my suburban backyard, as a teenage amateur astronomer marveling at the night skies, on my Great Aunt's 200 acre farm in the foothills of the Ozarks and exploring the New Mexico desert for two decades.

This lovely hardbound book, about 9 x 11 inches, is filled with black and white photographs of Gethsemani, the Cistercian Monastery south of Bardstown, KY, where in 1941 Merton entered for solitude until his final days in 1968. Although his autobiographical *Seven Storey Mountain* (1948) provides many more details of his upbringing, loss of parents and struggle to become Catholic and enter an Order, *Landscapes of Paradise* provides a fascinating view of the knobs, trees, paths, roads, ponds, wildlife and weather of his rural sacred retreat. As a visual artist, nature lover, storyteller and person who finds healing and spiritual inspiration in nature, this book touches my very soul as I see with Merton's eyes and read from his journal entries how each day and night brought new experiences, from hearing a crow's calling to finding a hawk feather to hiking up a Tent Knob in a storm of rain and wind. On the way back down Merton found an accidental shelter. His contemplative soul found meaning and opportunity for quiet listening: (Pg. 58) "Merton was surprised to discover halfway down a 'bower God had prepared for me...It had been designed specifically for this moment. There was a tree stump, in an even place. It was dry and a small cedar arched over it, like a green tent, forming an alcove. There I sat in silence and loved the wind in the forest and listened for a good while to God...The peace of the woods steals over me when I am at prayer.'" I have visited Gethsemani a number of times and hiked the knobs and other quiet places. This book has a map in the back and photographer

IN. Registration required.
Cost: \$150 includes all
food and lodging. Learn
more at
[www.maryhamilton.info/
Programs/WOWretreats.h
tm](http://www.maryhamilton.info/Programs/WOWretreats.htm)

December 16, 7:00 PM,
The Scott County
Storytelling Guild at the
Scott County Library, call
502-863-3566. 3rd
Tuesday of the Month
Story Swap. Holiday
Tales old and new.

December 29,
Wandering Storytellers at
Natasha's Bistro. 8:00
p.m. Admission: \$5.00.
Natasha's Bistro, 112
Esplanade, Lexington,
KY. Contact: 502-484-
3359 or
www.beetnik.com. The
theme for December is
"Compassion" stories of
heart and the human
condition, etc. This is a
KSA fund raising event.

Hinkle was permitted to photograph even those sites not normally open to the public.

Why is nature important to storytellers? And how does it bring experiences to our stories that we share with others? Our environment is the daily dramatic backdrop to the narrative we create or relate—weather, time of day, clouds, the earth below us, trees or flowers and an endless panorama of interplaying elements which variously nurture or challenge or threaten us. Furthermore, our eyes seek out our projective perception which looks for a metaphor reflective of our inner emotional and cognitive dynamic. A butterfly reminds me to float along freely in my life. Wind-changing clouds tell of the ever varying conditions of our lives. A gentle rain coaxes me to slow down and center for reflection and relaxation.

In addition, nature's gifts were wrapped in Merton's theology, (p. 123), "There is no leaf that is not in Your care." I too have found healing and spiritual renewal walking, away from others, sitting where no one can impose on my retreat and hiking toward an almost desperate loneliness. In many great stories, our protagonist seeks the open spaces and the faraway lands.

When I tell my Southwest stories, I bring red sand from southern New Mexico, bare gray cholla cactus "skeletons", obsidian rock, pumice and many photos including the rain swollen arroyos. As I tell my mind holds a wealth of experiences from my countless hikes, seeing walking rain, horned toads and so many visual and sensorial images of the desert.

I recommend *Landscapes of Paradise*, not only for a summative view of Merton's contemplative interaction with Kentucky earth and sky but also because it highlights again and again through its 157 pages that we are connected with the land, its creatures and bounty. (P. 44) "Christ lives close to the soil and His Apostles were men who grew up in the midst nature."

A simple story

by Ann Roseberry

The simple story was first told as my kindergarten kids and I huddled together in a hallway at a daycare center. Tornado sirens had sounded out warnings and the electricity was off. Our last glimpse outside was the sight of those dark frightening clouds in the sky that promised bad weather. It didn't seem to take long before I used up my portfolio of books, nursery rhymes, and traditional stories. Then I remembered some happy days from my own childhood.

I told the children about a picnic in a park in Madisonville, Kentucky. The sky that day was the color of a Heavenly Blue Morning Glory as I soared in the warm summer air. My daddy was pushing me in a bright red swing. I would tell him to swing me higher and higher. But I would catch my breath as the swing seemed to almost touch the tulip poplar trees near us. Then I would sing "Old Dan Tucker" as loud as I could to show that I was not afraid.

My sisters and brother were there with me. Sometimes my cousins and neighborhood families would join us to play and have picnics. The park playground was equipped with those wonderful see-saws, jungle gyms, and park merry-go-rounds. Our dads would grab the metal bars of the wooden merry-go-rounds and whirl us around like astronauts in training. The swings for the older kids were made of heavy chains and thick planks. Some of the more bold kids jumped out of the swings after reaching a sublime height. No layers of wood chips or a safe soft surface were there to cushion our falls. We all had

our share of bumps, bruises, and knocks on our heads. They were treated with ice wrapped in a worn washrag or sprayed with stinging iodine. My audience of five year olds wanted to hear all about my mother, father, and siblings.

Then I told them about the lunches on picnic tables that were covered with a special table clothes from home. My favorite was one that my daddy got from Cuba in his Navy days. It was cotton with a colorful map of Cuba populated with dancers, singers, and beach beauties in an era when the island was a haven of night clubs, casinos, and a treat for the sailors who were on liberty. Then my mother would lay a feast on the table. Usually some crisp tender fried chicken, maybe some baloney sandwiches, potato chips, baked beans with bacon, potato salad, deviled eggs, sliced home-grown tomatoes, and cake for dessert. A favorite of the family was yellow cake with chocolate icing. On special family reunion occasions we would gather around the ice cream churn where everyone would have to take turns until the sweet creamy ice cream was formed. It was so cold that your teeth and head would freeze but it felt good on those sweltering days of summer. Melted ice cream, watermelon juice, and grape pop stained our clothes and faces. Then as the sun was setting and the giant child-eating mosquitoes started to devour the kids, we all piled in the car and headed for home. We were sweaty, dirty, and happy. We took baths and were tucked in bed with stories and threats not to get up until the morning.

The kids were quiet as I finished my narrative. Then they asked me to "Tell it again. Tell it again." And I did adding more detail with each telling and going over slowly the parts that they enjoyed. I told it until the director of the daycare said it was safe to go back to our classroom. The dangerous storms had passed.

At circle time the next day, the students asked me to tell the story about the park. If I left out anything, they would remind me. Some of the kids would pretend that they had a day in the park with their dad and mom and tell their friends about it. I knew they had no dad to swing them and their mom was not able to give them a picnic lunch. Maybe it can be a story they make a reality for their children. Some of those kids are now adults and they remember that story as one of their favorites.

It's good to hear a story that can scare your pants off or an exotic fantasy from another time and culture or the humor and wisdom of a Jack Tale or a powerful and wonderful parable. It's also good to celebrate the simple story and sweet memory of a red swing, a Heavenly Blue Morning Glory sky, and a picnic in the park.