



# Kentucky Storytelling Association

April 2011 Support and Appreciation for the Art of Storytelling In Kentucky Volume 7 Issue 2

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## Useful Links:

### KSA Website

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

### National Storytelling Network Website:

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

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## Message from our President

When Thomas sent out the KSA Newsletter notice a few weeks ago I applied my normal procrastination and planned to write a few notes early in the week of March 13. I am writing this Saturday, March 19. After a couple of hectic days last weekend, my Father-in-Law had bypass surgery Monday and set my poorly planned writing schedule into limbo. Penny's Dad had successful surgery, is recuperating nicely and will be home soon. All this extended my already long work days into overdrive.

Now to KSA information: Your KSA Board met February 12 in Owensboro at the home of Laura and Emilee Seaman. It is very kind of Laura and Emilee to open their home for our meeting. We completed some plans for our KSA Conference that will be November 4 & 5 at Dale Hollow State Park at Burkesville, KY. Be sure to mark your calendars for this weekend. Annual Conference is a great way to meet our KSA Family and hear some good stories. While the seminars are a good opportunity to sharpen our storytelling skills, the conference is also geared to those whose primary goal is to enjoy our storytelling art.

At the board meeting we also advanced our plans for the "Storytelling In The Mountains" at Harlan, KY on Saturday, May 21. This will be the fourth year for this event. I was there last year, shared a story, and the evening was enjoyed by all. Last Year's KSA President, Pam Holcomb, does most of the work planning this event as a fundraiser for KSA. Pam is on the hunt for more storytellers for Saturday evening; please contact her:

Cell: 606-273-1494, email: [pfolcomb@msn.com](mailto:pfolcomb@msn.com)

With a goal to improve my storytelling skills, I attended a WOW Weekend at Storytellers Riverhouse Bed and Breakfast in Bethlehem, Indiana. A WOW Weekend is a "Working on Our Work" Storytelling Weekend organized by Mary Hamilton & Cynthia Changaris. These gals run a powerful workshop and they arranged the best weather weekend during February for our seminar. Storytellers Riverhouse is situated along the Ohio River and we enjoyed peaceful walks along the river bank, lots of river boat traffic and two evenings with the most spectacular moon rises you can imagine. As you would expect the moon rise was from the Kentucky side of our Ohio River!

Our group included two ladies with no platform experience and several nationally known storytellers from three states. My experience level is about two years into being a storyteller. Being the only guy out of seven attendees, there were a few times I may have stifled a bit of feminine creativity. All six ladies were tolerant of my presence and quite accepting to having a man on the premises. I left Bethlehem confident that my storytelling will be better because of the WOW Weekend.

For those interested in attending a WOW Weekend contact: <http://www.maryhamilton.info/Programs/WOWretreats.htm>  
After a WOW Weekend you will be a better, more confident and enthused storyteller!

Russ Conrad

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The other At-large Board  
member position is  
vacant.

### Contact Us:

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### News and Announcements:

WOW – Working on Our  
Work Storytelling  
Weekends at Storyteller’s  
Riverhouse, Bethlehem,  
Indiana will be available  
in May and in August,  
2011. May 27 – 29,  
2011, (yes, that is also  
Memorial Day weekend,  
which may make travel  
more convenient for  
some), and August 12 –  
14, 2011. The WOW Fee  
of \$150 includes your  
meals and your lodging.  
Learn more about WOW

## Storytelling in the Mountains

The Kentucky Storytelling Association in conjunction with the Harlan County Cooperative Extension will host the 4<sup>th</sup> annual “Storytelling in the Mountains” on Saturday May 21<sup>st</sup> from 6:30 to 9 p.m. in the Harlan Depot. This year’s evening of telling will feature some of Kentucky’s finest tellers: Russ Conrad, Maggie and Mike Beville, Mary Ann Zoll, Charlie Hardy, Jeff Jones, Octavia Sexton, Buck P. Creacy, David Benning, Jacob Craiger, Pam Holcomb, Laura Seaman, Emilee Seaman, Britt Lawson IV, Mark Lawson, and Rich Haynes. Make plans now to attend this exceptional evening of storytelling. Directions to the Harlan County Extension Depot (110 River Street) From Lexington:

*Take I-75 South to Exit 29 (Barbourville / Corbin). At the bottom of the ramp turn left onto HWY 25 E.*

*Take HWY 25 E thru Corbin and Barbourville and into Pineville. At the 3rd traffic light, turn left onto HWY 119 N to Harlan. Travel on 119 N for approximately 25 miles. Turn right at the traffic light at the end of 119 N onto HWY 421 S. Go to traffic light #5 and turn left onto HWY 38. At the flashing yellow light turn right and then turn left. The Harlan County Extension Depot will be on your right with parking at both ends.*

## Storyteller’s Wisdom

“My motto is ‘There’s always a story to tell’” she said with a huge smile and making sure the twinkle in her eye grasped the attention of everyone in the room. Pam Holcomb came from Harlan to Elliott County to teach the art of storytelling.

“There are only ten of us traditional mountain story tellers left” she said. Story telling goes back to the days of the Bible and have been part of all cultures ever since”.

Pam’s talent captures the interest of all ages from the very young to community elders.

“Most everyone is interested in stories”, she said. “But one time I was telling in front of this bunch of teenagers. There were three or four young men that didn’t see the purpose of them being there nor the need for stories. So they sat with their back to me. I didn’t say anything to them, just went on with my telling. There’s a skill teachers have called ‘with-it-ness’. It means we know everything going on in the room without having to look straight at it. We’re with it. I used my with-it-ness to watch these non-believers in the power of stories. Pretty soon I saw them twisting in their chair, then they turned it just a little bit so they could see, then their chairs were turned half way, and you know before that story was over they had turned their chairs completely around and was looking right at me. Yes, there’s a power in stories, one that can’t be denied.”

Thirty years in a classroom teaching math, speech, and theatre gave Pam all the experience she needs to teach and entertain. Her story topics range from students that left a lasting impression to an aunt who stared down a squirrel because she wanted to have him at her supper table...and not as a guest.

“If a story doesn’t fit, you won’t be comfortable telling it” she said. It’s kinda like clothes, it has to be right. Try it on”, she said, “Watch yourself in the mirror. Listen to yourself. Does it feel right, if so then it is your story. Tell it as yours, don’t try to imitate someone else, be yourself”.

How do you make a story interesting? Pam gave lots of pointers and, just like any good teacher as she spoke she demonstrated each of her points.

“Eye contact with your audience is key to good story telling” she said as she looked at each person at the table.

“You use your whole body to convey your feelings”, she said.

“Hand gestures are very important but must be used at the right time and you

Weekends at  
<http://www.maryhamilton.info/Programs/WOWretreats.htm>

### **Weekly:**

**A Time for Tales, Sundays** – from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m., heard on Morehead State Public Radio, 90.3 FM. (Morehead, KY), and hosted by Carolyn Franzini. Each week the stories relate to a theme... "Work" "School" "Ghost stories", "Lessons Learned" and more. Listen on the web at [www.msuradio.com](http://www.msuradio.com).

### **The Art of Storytelling Show Podcast and Blog**

- Is a national conversation from all perspectives on the profession of storytelling with children. It is recorded as a conference call biweekly, Tuesdays at 7 or 8 p.m. Hosted by Eric Wolf, Yellow Springs, OH. Each show features a specific guest and topic. You can join in the conference call conversation, subscribe to the podcast via iTunes or listen on the website: <http://www.artofstorytellingshow.com>. You can also learn details on upcoming shows on the website.

Paschal Baute, KSA member and Spellbinder is collecting storyteller's favorite movies highlighting the art and craft of storytelling. Such a list would be useful for study and fun, and helpful references for others. Which movies illustrate the art, craft

never want to over use them".

"But the part of the body that can portray the most emotion is the eyes. You can make them look sad or you can make them happy. You can squint or you can open them wide to show surprise. And the same is for the voice. Voice inflection is extremely important. No one likes to listen to someone talk in a monotone voice. So when you are happy, your voice is happy and when you are sad your voice is sad. It's that easy", she said.

Pam discussed the six ingredients that provide the secret for retelling a story well.

- Select a story that lends itself to retelling – To be memorable your story should have a sense of earnestness about it, showing respect for character and genuine emotions.
- Visualize every scene and character – In your mind really see what is occurring until you feel you have actually lived that experience. Then you can make the audience feel it.
- Use simple powerful language consistent with the story's style. Be yourself, don't try to use someone else's words, make it your story.
- Breathe life into the tale – Give it sparkle and spontaneity. Be enthused in your voice, in your body, and in your eyes.
- Create suspense through a varied rate – it is boring to hear anything – music, speeches, and lines of a play, stories — at the same dreary pace. Variety is necessary to communicate thought and feeling.
- Use a flexible voice – Vocally distinguish between the various people, giants, animals, and monsters that appear frequently in stories. Use a wide range of pitch, quality, force, and rate in your speech.

Through her presentation, Pam gained respect as a teacher, through her examples of storytelling, Pam gained fans. She made us laugh and she made us cry. She made us think of our ancestors and love some of hers that we have never met. But more than that, she told us how to find a story that belongs to us and tell it like it is ours. She left us feeling good about ourselves.

Pam is instrumental in planning "Storytelling in The Mountains" in Harlan Sat., May 21.

Gwenda Adkins

## **Higher Ground Performance in Harlan, County**

The folks who brought you Higher Ground\* invite you to be in a NEW PLAY about Harlan County, "Talking Dirt". This is the third play in the highly acclaimed trilogy. The first play "Higher Ground" was filmed by a crew from KET and has been a part of the Kentucky Muse series. It has also been featured in all the major newspapers and several magazines including Southern Living. The performance dates are: dates are April 29, 30 and May 1, 5, 7, 8. This is a community based production. The stories that make up this play are from Harlan County, about Harlan County. For more information contact: Robert Gipe at: [robert.gipe@kctcs.edu](mailto:robert.gipe@kctcs.edu) or Pam Holcomb: [pfholcomb@msn.com](mailto:pfholcomb@msn.com).

The new play is about the strength of the county's people and the challenges they face. It has stories about young people growing up in Harlan today, stories about leaving and coming back to Harlan County, stories of lost communities and stories that we hope will make you laugh, cry, and think. Stories were collected in the county by local people. The play will also be full of music performed and, in many cases, written by local performers.

Higher Ground is a community performance project coordinated by the Appalachian Program at Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College. Since 2003, the project has involved over five hundred Harlan County residents in collecting oral histories and interviews, writing songs, acting, and singing and playing music. Over 100 county residents have participated as cast members. The project's first production, Higher Ground, involved a cast of seventy-five and celebrated community history and explored how the

and power of storytelling? Email Paschal with your nominations for favorite movies on storytelling. He will publish the results later. Contact him at [paschal.baute@insightbb.com](mailto:paschal.baute@insightbb.com)

### Upcoming Events:

**April 25, May 30 & Jun 27**

If you love stories, hearing them and telling them, then you'll want to join us at Natasha's Bistro, 112 Esplanade, in Lexington, Kentucky. Stories begin at 8:00 p.m. and run until 10-ish. Cover: \$5.00. This event raises funds to support Kentucky Storytelling Association programs and projects. For more information and reservations—not required but helpful—visit KSA Wandering Storytellers.

April 8-10, The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Cape Girardeau Storytelling Festival, in Cape Girardeau, MO. More information can be found at <http://www.capestorytelling.com/>.

April 9, Indianapolis, IN, 7:30–9:30 pm at the Frank and Katrina Basile Theater in the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center—fall in love with every kind of love story as storyteller Beth Horner shares adventures of the heart in *Love Lost, Found and Fumbled*. For more info, visit <http://www.storytellingarts.org/>.

community could respond to the prescription drug abuse crisis. Higher Ground has been the subject of a Kentucky Educational Television documentary. The second play, *Playing with Fire*, debuted in 2009 continued the exploration of the drug crisis and celebrated the work of the county's coal miners.

## Spotlight on KSA Member Gwenda Adkins

I grew up on a small tobacco farm in Magoffin County with eight siblings. My parents are my heroes. Being in the outdoors, wading creeks, climbing trees and watching wildlife were my play. Nothing has changed except now I find a way to work my passions into educational programs. My career as Elliott County Extension Agent began in 1979 and continues. My major program emphasis is in economic development, emphasizing leadership development, the environment, community pride, and health issues. My greatest successes are my sons Josh and Kevin Adkins. Josh is a PhD candidate in entomology at UK and Kevin starts his PhD program in Physics at UK this fall. As a single mom for 22 years, I can vouch for the fact that it does take a village. In my case it was a county. The people are awesome. Last October I began a new journey with a new friend when I married Gene Johnson.

*Why did you join KSA?*

I love storytelling and I love Kentucky! What could team them together better than a statewide organization and marketing both. I believe story telling and interpretation are the best methods of teaching. As a County Extension Agent, I incorporate story telling into my programs whenever possible. KSA is a great source for finding the best storyteller for the subject.

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

Staying connected and getting announcements of where tellers will be performing. Its a great networking organization.

*What kind of stories do you enjoy?*

Wherever I am, I want to hear local stories told by local tellers. The history, culture, and character of a place and people can be learned through story telling. I also love to laugh so—Bill Lepp's rendition of his experiences is absolutely wonderful. I like tall tales too but local stories touch the heart.

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

My grandfather entertained us during our chores such as stripping tobacco or hoeing corn by telling stories. He made us laugh when laughter was hard to find. It's what I remember most about him. Through story telling I got to know my ancestors. I've gotten to know my father and his family through his childhood stories and him as an adult through his stories of working away from home. There is nothing more powerful or moving than a good story by an authentic teller. Storytelling and writing makes me look at life differently than others because I'm always thinking *how could that be told so others could see and feel it?*

## A Book Review

*Team Up! Tell In Tandem!* A How to Guide from Experienced Tandem Storytellers.

\$22.95 by Jonathan Hammer Wright Available from author.

[jh@jonathaandharold.com](mailto:jh@jonathaandharold.com) or Amazon.com or Lulu and through Lulu: <http://www.Lulu.com>

I was at a storytelling conference in Wisconsin a few years back and heard terrific tandem storytellers Jonatha and Harold Wright. I'll never forget the hilarious tandem story they told about a flattened chicken and then used a yellow dish towel to bring the chicken back to life.

I must have gone over to talk to them and told them I also told in tandem. Lo and behold, years later they called me and asked me to participate and write a section in the book which began as a "How to Manual" about performing and story telling in tandem—two persons telling a story together. Well, it takes many

April 12, Indianapolis, IN,  
5:30–7:30 pm at the  
IndyFringe Theatre, 719  
E. St. Clair St., is  
Jabberwocky: Spiritual  
Callings. From time to  
time, many of us have  
personally struggled with  
our religious and spiritual  
life. No matter your faith,  
these struggles are  
universal. Listen as local  
religious leaders share  
their journey toward  
spirituality. Admission is  
free and includes  
appetizers and cash bar.

Jabberwocky is a  
monthly gathering of  
"jabbers" willing to share  
their life stories based on  
a different theme each  
month. This event is co-  
sponsored by Storytelling  
Arts of Indiana and the  
IndyFringe Festival.

Check  
<http://www.storytellingarts.org/> for more info.

May 4-7 St. Louis, MO.  
The St. Louis Storytelling  
Festival is an event held  
in early May that has  
been offered for 31 years  
to people of all ages in  
the St. Louis  
Metropolitan area. Each  
year, more than 40  
regional and 7 featured  
storytellers and their  
audiences gather during  
this four-day event for  
the telling of tales. Visit  
<http://stlstorytellingfestival.org/> for more info.

May 10, Indianapolis, IN,  
5:30-7:30 pm, at the  
IndyFringe Theatre, 719  
E. St. Clair St.,  
Indianapolis, is  
Jabberwocky: Birthing  
Stories. In celebration of  
mothers, join us for  
stories surrounding births  
through the eyes of  
mothers, midwives,

years to get a book published and I got a surprise package the summer of 2010. There was my section entitled, "Favorite stories I like to tell in tandem". I was honored to be included among the other knowledgeable contributors. Not only am I a contributor but over 50 storytellers from all over the country joined in this very well-written and comprehensive book on ALL phases of tandem story telling. One or more of their techniques or suggestions may be just the ones you are looking for if you hope to become tandem storyteller. I found many of the contributors were storytellers I knew or wanted to know, so it was very interesting for me to hear what they had to say. The topics included in the book express the difficulties and the advantages and may even inspire you to tell in tandem if you already don't. I believe after reading *Team Up! Tell in Tandem!* that it will certainly make the reader appreciate listening to tandem tales that much more. I personally want to give Jonatha Wright so much credit for her vision. As those who have known them over the years, they have enriched the world of storytelling by their dedication to the storytelling world. Reviewed by Linda Spitzer

## Tales of the American Civil War

(Permission courtesy Bonnie Strassell, originally appearing in the Owen County Historical Society News on Wednesday, February 16, 2011).

By Bonnie Strassell

Hear the story of the U.S. Civil War from a 'veteran'.

Whittling away on a stick, his gravely voice at times dropping to an emotional whisper, James, a 90-year-old Confederate veteran, transported a crowd of 30 back in time to experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the Civil War. Owen County storyteller Bill Watson portrayed James at the historical society meeting Thursday; and life for the common soldier was revealed in all its complexities. Although hunger and exposure to the elements were constant concerns, James was affected most by the carnage he witnessed and the utter loss he felt at his inability to somehow stem the tide of war. The slavery issue was not the reason most young men joined. Some wanted excitement and others just wanted to teach the opposite side a lesson.

Battle after battle was described: Antietam, Manassas, Perryville, and Shiloh. Even after General Lee surrendered at Appomattox in 1865, seven more battles were fought. James conjectured: "Maybe they (the soldiers) hadn't gotten word the war was over, or maybe they just didn't want to give up." Three million men fought in the war, with an estimated 625,000 dying from wounds or sickness. The women who were left behind had to deal with keeping families together, running households or farms, and trying to prevent the confiscation of their food and animals by armies on both sides of the conflict.

The audience chuckled as James paused in his story to interject a funny incident to lighten the mood. James claimed that from a young age his marksmanship was so accurate that when he shot a squirrel (pronounced "skurl" by James) he only shot close to the varmint's head. This resulted in death of the squirrel by shock from the concussion, and gave the opportunity to retrieve an intact musket ball to be used once again.

Among the audience were descendants of Civil War soldiers. Bobby Gibson's great-grandfather fought for awhile with John Hunt Morgan, but had a "falling out" with him. Great-grandpa was captured and confined on a prison ship in Virginia, but while being transported, he made an escape near Monterey and hid along Eagle Creek for a year. "That," Bobby concludes, "is how my family came to Owen County." Carol Wooten, fifth-grade teacher at Owen County Elementary, came with one of her students, Grant McMillen. Carol is very knowledgeable in Civil War history and is sharing that love of history with her students.

A hush fell over the room as James concluded his story with his last battle. On that smoke-filled battlefield he met his brother who had been forced into

doctors and maybe even a father or two.

Admission is free and includes appetizers and cash bar. Afterward, you can share your own 3-5 minute birthing story during the open-mike portion of the program.

Jabberwocky is a monthly gathering of "jabbers" willing to share their life stories based on a different theme each month. Check

<http://www.storytellingarts.org/> for more info.

May 14, Indianapolis, IN, 7:30-9:30 pm, Frank and Katrina Basile Theater in the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, is Mom-O-Roma.

Back by popular demand, storyteller Kevin Kling and singer-accordionista Simone Perrin will share the stage once again in a special performance celebrating mothers. This is a free event. Visit

<http://www.storytellingarts.org/> for more info.

June 16-18

### 5<sup>th</sup> Intl. Christian "Storytelling-In-Ministry" Conf.

For more information: Early Bird & KSA discounts & secure electronic registration go to:

[TheChristianStoryteller.com](http://TheChristianStoryteller.com)

Or just click the

"Big Red Button"



service by the Union Army. Just as they recognized each other, a Confederate Minnie ball found its way into his brother's heart; and as James crawled to him over ground saturated with the intermingled blood of both Confederate and Yankee soldiers, he desperately searched for answers to justify this war. Not willing to talk anymore about that tragic day, James abruptly got up from his chair, leaving the audience, too, with a sense of loss on how to explain a war in which families fought against one another, and a land, especially in the South, that was left in utter devastation. Perhaps as Bill Watson tells the story of James, people everywhere will exhibit renewed determination that "these dead shall not have died in vain." Our history is a vital part of who we are, and we can change where we're going only when we know where we've been.



Bill Watson, in character as "James"

## 5<sup>th</sup> International Christian "Storytelling-In-Ministry" Conference comes to Georgetown, Kentucky

This conference focuses on Christian storytelling and Bible telling for: Storytellers, Pastors, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Leaders, Students, Christian Educators, Grandparents, Missionaries, Home-schoolers, and anyone interested in family-friendly fun. Questions? Call: (606) 573-4376, or (502) 370-5322. Age Suitability: All Ages (Under 16 needs an adult guardian. No Child Care) For info & KSA discounts go to; [www.TheChristianStoryteller.com](http://www.TheChristianStoryteller.com)

Storytelling enjoys a wide and extremely diverse following and that IS a good thing. And while clearly not everyone's cup of tea, this conference is truly unique in the storytelling world. First, because most of the participants are not storytellers. They are the church leadership of just about every Christian church and church support organization you can think of and even some Jewish friends make a point to attend. The atmosphere is unique too. Of course, there is storytelling, workshops, and showcase moments, even some music, all transitioned with well... worship. Extraordinary.

Every workshop focuses on telling the stories from the Bible or how to tell them better. During these 2 ½ days there are four concerts, 29 workshop choices, 15 showcases, 3 Q&A Forums, and a trio of 6 hr "Intensives" that really dig into some critical aspects of storytelling. There is even an Ice Cream Social. Is this conference for you? Maybe.

